

Brill's Companion to the Reception of Sophocles

Brill's Companion to Classical Reception

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Brill's Companion to the Reception of Sophocles

Edited by

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Preface and Acknowledgements

Brill's Companion to the Reception of Sophocles provides a comprehensive coverage of the reception of the extant Sophoclean plays over the centuries (from antiquity up to modernity), across cultures (from the strictly Indo-European/western cultures to the more 'exotic' ones), and within a range of different areas of human knowledge and experience (from literature and visual arts to stage and screen, and so forth). The volume aims to fill a gap in the relevant area of reception studies and is expected to be of interest to a diverse readership: students and researchers in ancient tragedy and the reception of Sophocles, a wider academic readership, and an interdisciplinary audience.

Comprehensive in scope, this volume is organized in such a way as to explore the vast field of reception specifically around 'big' mythic themes and threads identifiable in the Sophoclean *corpus*. With this framework in mind we have chosen a thematic organization over a sequence of chapters arranged according to the often questionable chronological order of the tragedies. This arrangement is designed to offer both a convenient way to deal with the richness of Sophocles' tragedies in an all-inclusive manner, and a way to set an almost immediate 'big picture' of what Sophocles' theatre is about. While expert readers, scholars, and students alike would find familiar references to the various aspects of Sophocles' plays, within the 'big picture'-frame, non-expert readers would be intrigued to single out and explore the theme that might best address their interest and still be able to grasp the 'big picture'.

We have thus singled out three thematic threads: 1. *The Tragedies of War* ("Ajax", and "Philoctetes"); 2. *The Tragedy of Destiny* ("Oedipus the King", and "Oedipus at Colonus"); 3. *The Heroines' Tragedies: Sisters, Daughters, and Wives* ("Antigone", "Electra", and "The Women of Trachis").

An Appendix titled *Not Only Tragedy* is devoted to the best preserved ancient satyr drama, after Euripides' *Cyclops*, i.e., the fragmentary play *The Trackers*.

An Introductory chapter engages with Sophocles' life and works, while a concluding set of Indices frames the core of the volume.

Predictably, as the defining titles chosen for the three parts might suggest, such thematic categorization has posed challenges, especially given the inevitable overlaps between themes. *The Tragedies of War*, for instance, might include "Antigone" and "Electra", as their tragedies are set after, and in a way spring from, a war, too. Needless to say, the "destiny-theme" would encompass all the tragic stories, although—as is well known—it surfaces in the two selected Oedipus plays in a more profound way. Similarly, some individual roles singled out for specific characters, as a way to defining the second

thematic section (*The Heroines' Tragedies: Sisters, Daughters, and Wives*), are understandably not the only possible role those characters project: Antigone, for instance, is also 'a daughter', thus her character is inextricably part of the reception history of "Oedipus at Colonus", which 'belongs' to *The Tragedy of Destiny*.

Dealing with complexities like thematic overlapping, an equilibrium between predominant theme and mythological affinity was sought as a criterion to be used for the arrangement of the volume into the main thematic sections. At the same time, to reduce likely overlaps and yet provide the reader with as much of a complete and harmonious blend of information as possible, cross-references have been freely deployed.

In each case, arranging the tragedies included in each thematic section in an intelligible sequence has presented yet another challenge. The lack of firm evidence for dating each tragedy (with a few exceptions) prevented us from adopting what is perhaps the most obvious choice, i.e., a chronological sequence. With this in mind and, once again, with the purpose of providing a unitary view, a thematic sequence, i.e., an arrangement that mirrors the order in which the episodes of the same 'big mythic event' followed (or were supposed to follow) one another, has been used wherever possible. Such is the case, for instance, with Part 1 and 2. The sequence preference based on the chronology of the plays—uncertain though it might be—has prevailed where the theme that the tragedies share is not linked to a common 'big mythic event': such is the case with Part 3.¹

As for the inner structure of each chapter that (within its own thematic section) deals with a single tragedy, a 'thematic' organization rather than a chronological one has also been favoured. In this case the 'theme' corresponds to a field/area of reception. Each chapter is in fact articulated in texts related to the reception of the play in *Literature*, *Fine Arts* (subdivided, when possible, in 'Visual Arts', 'Music', and 'Dance') and *Stage and Screen*. Each chapter is also supplemented by two 'resource' paragraphs, one providing information on the major scholarly works about the reception of the specific tragedy, whereas the latter recommends a selection of further readings, carefully organized *per* field.

The ambiguous or indistinct borders between some fields/areas of reception have, once again, presented a challenge. Being aware that, for instance, a play is a *literary* text which belongs to the 'dramatic' *literary genre* and, as such,

1 In particular the dates of *Electra* and *The Women of Trachis* posed some difficulty for the sequence we have finally choose. Details about their chronology are fully provided in their respective chapters.

would find its place in both *Literature*- and *Stage*-paragraphs, by relying on the details outlined by the available sources, we have identified the predominant features (whether *literary* or *performative*) of the work itself as the criterion for choosing the most appropriate paragraph. The same methodology applies to the subsections 'Music' and 'Dance,' which share a border with the paragraph devoted to stage productions. Due to the conventional nature of these criteria, their application could thus not be expected to be fully rigorous. Hence, authors were the final judges as to the placement of a certain work wherever the borders between sections and/or subsections of reception seemed to faint. Finally, the discussion in each paragraph is mainly organized chronologically.²

Consistency within each chapter along the lines and the general approach described above is distinctive in each contribution, yet there is some degree of diversity, for example in an author's choice of one period, or a literary genre, or an entire field of reception over another. Similarly, where the flow of the discussion would make it more effective, some authors preferred a thematic transition (from one work of reception to another) over a chronological one. However, such differences in style and structuring have been kept to a minimum.

Chapter lengths are predictably uneven: more space has been reserved for those tragedies that enjoyed a long and diversified reception history as well as an abundance of bibliographic resources—which has posed no small challenge to each contributor, when it came to the issue of selecting items to be analyzed. Additionally, absence of reception in specific fields (very often in 'dance' and even in 'cinema') has resulted in chapters of unequal length and, occasionally, in some thinner discussions.

A final note should be reserved for the introductory chapter devoted to Sophocles' Life and Work, the Appendix, and the final set of Indices.

The introductory chapter, by Enrico Magnelli, is an original account of Sophocles' life and work from a reception viewpoint, with a focus on the ancient and byzantine perspectives.

As for the Appendix, the fragmentary status of *The Trackers* and its different dramatic/literary genre have suggested to reserve to this work its own place, by

2 Perhaps the absence of a *In Translation*-paragraph might be surprising. Although aware that translation is both a form and a medium of reception (see, e.g., Venuti, S. L. [2000] *The Translation Studies Reader*, London, pp. 417-29; Hardwick, L. [2003] *Reception Studies. Greece and Rome. New Surveys in the Classics*, Oxford, pp. 9-10), not without some uneasiness, we decided to exclude it for the sake of the wider readership of our Companion. Nonetheless, a possibility to discuss some major translations, for their apparent impact on the reception history of the tragedy, was left to the contributor's discretion.

also allowing the contributor to be more flexible in terms of the distribution of the material according to the status of the play and related resources.

As for the Indices, apart from the conventional “Index Locorum” and “Index of Subjects”, we have added an “Index of Modern Adaptations” which have been discussed for each tragedy. Beside itemizing each work (with her/his author and date), this index provides page (and note) numbers of related discussion. This Index is designed to serve as a ‘database’ and as a helm to easily navigate through the volume.

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R. Lauriola – K. Demetriou

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Introduction: Ancient (and Byzantine) Perspectives on Sophocles' Life and Poetry

Enrico Magnelli

There is much to say on the life (and afterlife) of Sophocles and the Sophoclean *corpus* as a whole. Yet this is not the place for a comprehensive survey of either topic, such research tools being easily available elsewhere—two valuable *Companions* on our poet have seen the light of day in recent years.¹ Here I will rather focus on how ancient and medieval readers appreciated, depicted, or even imagined Sophocles and his poetry.² As a matter of fact, their readings have influenced (sometimes quite deeply) more recent evaluation of Attic drama, encouraging “many modern scholars to understate or oversimplify the complexity of Sophocles' plays, or to base their opinions on an artificially schematic view of the genre, in which Sophocles somehow comes to represent an ideal or normative type of tragedy”.³ This has deep roots in the late Classical and Hellenistic periods. As we shall see, ancient literary criticism and biographical fiction influenced each other, building up an image of Sophocles as a kind of ‘Mr. Perfect’ in both poetry and life.

-
- 1 Those edited by Kirk Ormand (2012) and Andreas Markantonatos (2012b): both include chapters on Sophocles' biography (Scodel 2012, Tyrrell 2012) and the transmission of his plays (Finglass 2012, Avezzù 2012), the latter also on ancient and modern Sophoclean criticism (Markantonatos 2012a). The ancient evidence on Sophocles' life is analyzed in great detail by Ugolini (2000), while Lefkowitz (2012) 79–86 sensibly discusses the biographical tradition on him. I am glad to acknowledge my debt to all these scholars. Let me also express my gratitude to Rosanna Lauriola, for her advice, patience, and true friendship; to Gianfranco Agosti, Claudio De Stefani and Francesco Valerio, who read this paper in advance of publication; to Chiara Franci, for our long talks about Sophocles' ancient biographies. All translations from ancient languages are mine.
 - 2 On this topic, see Wright (2012): an intelligent piece of scholarship, and though my approach is slightly different from Wright's, to some extent our papers complement each other. On the first ten centuries of Sophocles' afterlife, see also Easterling (2006).
 - 3 Wright (2012) 598–9.

Coming After . . . and Before

At the beginning of 405 BC, shortly after Sophocles' death at the age of 90,⁴ the comic poet Phrynichus in his *Muses* praised his good nature and successful life with these words:

μάκαρ Σοφοκλέης, ὃς πολὺν χρόνον βιοῦς
ἀπέθανεν εὐδαίμων ἀνὴρ καὶ δεξιός·
πολλὰς ποιήσας καὶ καλὰς τραγωδίας
καλῶς ἐτελεύτησ', οὐδὲν ὑπομείνας κακόν.

Blessed Sophocles! He who lived a long life and died a lucky, clever man: after having written many fine tragedies, he ended well, without suffering any evil.

(Phryn. fr. 32 Kassel/Austin = Soph. T 105 Radt)⁵

His life had in fact been happy and successful. He was entrusted with several public offices: *hellenotamias* (public treasurer of the Delian League) in 443–442 BC, *strategos* (general) in 441–440 and possibly later, *proboulos* (urban magistrate) after 411.⁶ He held the priesthood of some cult, and his religious piety became legendary—though both his promotion of the cult of Asclepius at Athens and his posthumous heroisation might be mere Hellenistic inventions.⁷ As a tragic poet, he gained more than twenty victories, being otherwise placed second but never third: some ancient sources extolled him as the

4 He was born ca. 496 BC at Colonus, an Attic deme few miles north of Athens.

5 On the fragment, see now Stama (2014) 197–206. Meineke (1839) 157 thought that Phrynichus had staged the contest of two tragic poets, possibly Sophocles and Euripides, with the Muses as judges: this remains highly speculative, see Harvey (2000) 100–3 and, again, Stama (2014) 191–6, with full bibliography.

6 See Ugolini (2000) 35–82; Totaro in Mastromarco/Totaro (2008) 94–5; Tyrrell (2012) 25–9; Scodel (2012) 30–5; ancient sources and modern literature in Radt (1999) 44–6. A second generalship, many years after 440, seems to be attested by Plutarch, *Life of Nicias* 15.2 (T 26 Radt) and *Life of Sophocles* 9 (text and meaning desperately uncertain), on which see Ugolini (2000) 59–64 and Jouanna (2007) 43–8: a more skeptical view in Woodbury (1970) 211–6.

7 See Connolly (1998), with detailed discussion of the evidence; Lefkowitz (2012) 82, 84–5; Tyrrell (2012) 33–6; Scodel (2012) 36; Kimmel-Clauzet (2013) 244–9. Recent reconsiderations of Sophocles' interest in Asclepius include Mitchell-Boyask (2007); Gelli (2007); Jouanna (2007) 73–90; Markantonatos (2007) 15–9; Faraone (2011) 225–8.

greatest ever.⁸ According to the Byzantine lexicon *Suda* (ε 2898 Adler, with Meursius' convincing emendation), Eratosthenes of Cyrene, the Alexandrian scholar, scientist and poet of the second half of the 3rd century BC, was called *Beta* to imply that he was the second best in many fields, but never the first. Be this "the malicious gossip of a learned society"⁹ or a later misunderstanding,¹⁰ nothing of this kind could apply to Sophocles. It was quite naive to assert that he "learned tragic poetry from Aeschylus", as we read in the anonymous, late Hellenistic *Life of Sophocles* (T 1 Radt):¹¹ at any rate, in 468 BC his *Triptolemos* (possibly his very beginning in tragic poetry) won no less than the first prize, his alleged master having to content himself with the second place.¹² If we are to trust Plutarch (or his source), Sophocles did not conceal his debt to Aeschylus, nor his effort to find his own way:

ὁ Σοφοκλῆς ἔλεγε τὸν Αἰσχύλου διαπεπαιχῶς ὄγκον, εἶτα τὸ πικρὸν καὶ κατὰ τεχνον τῆς αὐτοῦ κατασκευῆς, τρίτον ἤδη τὸ τῆς λέξεως μεταβάλλειν εἶδος, ὅπερ ἠθικώτατόν ἐστι καὶ βέλτιστον.

Sophocles declared that he had played around with the grandiloquence of Aeschylus, then with the sharpness and artificiality of his composition: and that, as a third step, he eventually changed that style into his own—a style which is the best and the most expressive of character.

(Plutarch, *On Progress in Virtue* 79b = T 100 Radt)¹³

8 He won eighteen first prizes at the City Dionysia and some six more at the Lenaea: see Tyrrell (2012) 25 with n. 36. Aristodemus in Xenophon's *Socratic Recollections* (1.4.3 = T 146 Radt) declares that in tragic poetry he used to admire Sophocles above all. Cicero (*Orator* 4 = T 147 Radt) and, more explicitly, the unknown author of a Greek rhetorical exercise (T 147A Radt) consider him the very best; the same view is expressed in two anonymous epitaphs, i.e. *Palatine Anthology* 6.145 = *FGE* 526–7 (T 182 Radt) and the elegiac couplet in *Life of Sophocles* 16 = *FGE* 576–7—both tentatively ascribed to Lobon of Argos by Crönert (1911) 141 and 145, on weak grounds: see Garulli (2004) 46–9.

9 Thus Pfeiffer (1968) 170: see also Vitrac (2008) 78.

10 As Geus (2002) 34–9 argues on good grounds.

11 4: παρ' Αἰσχύλῳ δὲ τὴν τραγωδίαν ἔμαθε. As Tyrrell (2012) aptly remarks, "wherever he learned his craft, it was surely not at Aeschylus' knee": see also Lefkowitz (2012) 79.

12 See T 36–7 Radt, with Tyrrell (2012) 24–5, Scodel (2012) 27–8, and Davidson (2012) 41.

13 I follow Valgiglio (1989) 143 n. 100, Castelli (2000) 49–51, Avezzù (2006) 63–4, and Davidson (2012) 48 in reading αὐτοῦ 'his' instead of αὐτοῦ 'his own' (sharpness and artificiality apparently belong to Aeschylus, not to Sophocles): for a different view, see Tyrrell (2005–6a) 135. This difficult passage has been variously interpreted and emended: Radt (1999) 69–70 collects all the relevant data, and Pelling (2007) offers a very perceptive analysis. Wilamowitz (1876) 334 n. 1, followed by other scholars, identified Plutarch's source with Ion of Chius

νυνὶ δ' ἔμελλεν, ὡς ἔφη Κλειδημίδης,
 ἔφεδρος καθεδεῖσθαι· καὶ μὲν Αἰσχύλος κρατῇ,
 ἔξειν κατὰ χώραν· εἰ δὲ μή, περὶ τῆς τέχνης
 διαγωνιείσθ' ἔφασκε πρὸς γ' Εὐριπίδην.

(*Xanthias*) And if that's so, why didn't Sophocles too stake a claim to the throne? (*The Servant*) Not him, by Zeus! When he came down here, he rather kissed Aeschylus, grasped his hand, and without quarrel withdrew any claim to the throne. And now he is ready, to say it with Cleidemides, to sit and wait in reserve: if Aeschylus wins, he will stay where he is; otherwise—he declared—he will compete with Euripides in tragic art.

(*Frogs* 786–94 = T 102 Radt)

At the end of the play, when the victorious Aeschylus triumphantly departs from the Underworld, his appeal to Pluto reaffirms this very view:

σὺ δὲ τὸν θάκον
 τὸν ἐμὸν παράδος Σοφοκλεῖ τηρεῖν
 καὶ διασώζειν, ἣν ἄρ' ἐγὼ ποτε
 δεῦρ' ἀφίκωμαι. τοῦτον γὰρ ἐγὼ
 σοφίᾳ κρίνω δεύτερον εἶναι.

And you hand over my throne to Sophocles to look after and preserve, should I ever come back here. Him I rank second to me in tragic art.¹⁸

(*Frogs* 1515–9 = T 102 Radt)

It is well possible that Sophocles' sudden death forced the comic poet to introduce some changes in the play he was writing; but we should not assume that, had Sophocles died one year before, Aristophanes would have allotted him

Van Daele (1928) 123, emended into *κἄναικος*, 'and without quarrel', perhaps the most convincing and economical solution, though the word is not attested elsewhere. For different views, see Fraenkel (1962) 163 n. 4; Dover (1993) 288–9; Handley (2000) 151–4; Totaro in Mastromarco/Totaro (2006) 636 n. 116.

18 As Dover (1993) 383 remarks, "we are left to imagine that Pluto will do as he is told and that Euripides will not have the spirit to contest the enthronement of Sophocles". Here I cannot agree with Wright (2012) 592 on the view that "since Aeschylus ends up being returned to the upper world, it is Sophocles who will inhabit the 'throne of tragedy' for posterity. In a sense, then, Sophocles (as ever) emerges as a 'winner'".

more space in the *Frogs*.¹⁹ “It is not easy to see—and the general silence about Sophocles in Old Comedy does little to encourage the effort—how good comedy could have been made out of a contest between Aeschylus and Sophocles”.²⁰ On a more general note, “one is struck by how little Sophocles features in the remains of fifth-century comedy”.²¹ Comic poets “do not (with one exception) mock Sophocles the man or make scurrilous jokes about his supposed personal habits”:²² but even from a literary point of view, there is nothing in Sophoclean poetry that could invite Aristophanes to make fun of it.²³ Apart from that, it is the competition itself between Aeschylus and Euripides that “makes it crystal clear why Sophocles has been sidelined by Aristophanes. What is required for his dramatic purposes is the strongest possible contrast between the old and the new, the old-fashioned and the new-fangled, [...] a contrast that he can exploit with all the exaggeration of cartoon-type stylization. There is no place for Sophocles in this titanic conflict of extremes”.²⁴ Let ‘Aeschylus’ say that he ranks Sophocles second to himself: we will never know whether such words really express Aristophanes’ own taste.

The comparison between Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides became customary in both Greek and Roman culture: the treatise *On the Three Tragedians* by the Peripatetic writer Heraclides Ponticus (fr. 179 Wehrli) is an early instance of such trend. But though the *Frogs* had great influence on ancient (and modern, to some extent at least) literary criticism,²⁵ Sophocles soon emancipated himself from the alleged second place. The most detailed analyses of the differences between the three tragedians are those by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*On Imitation*, 2 fr. 6.2.10 = T 120 Radt) and Dio Chrysostomus (*Oration* 52 = T 123 Radt). While Dionysius just defines the qualities of each poet—loftiness and verbal creativity for Aeschylus, characterization and dignity for Sophocles,

19 On this debated question, see Russo (1966) and (1984) 311–25; Dover (1993) 7–9; cf. Tyrrell (2012) 32.

20 Dover (1993) 9.

21 Wright (2012) 588.

22 Wright (2012) 588, see also Lauriola, below, 162–3. The exception which he refers to is *Peace* 695–9 (T 104a Radt), where Aristophanes, for inscrutable reasons, depicts Sophocles as a greedy, decrepit old man: Olson (1998) 211 and Ugolini (2000) 31–2 n. 30 discuss various possibilities with well deserved skepticism. Fileni (2007) reads this passage as deliberately paradoxical and surrealistic.

23 In fact, allusions to and paratragic reworking of Sophoclean texts are never bitter or hostile: see, again, Wright (2012) 589–91.

24 Davidson (2012) 40.

25 Hunter (2009) 10–52 provides an illuminating analysis of this play as “foundational text for Western criticism” (p. 42).

realism and rhetorical skill for Euripides²⁶—Dio, comparing their respective plays on Philoctetes, asserts that “Sophocles appears to stand midway between the two others”: but his agenda is quite different from Aristophanes’, and he does not say that the poet was second to Aeschylus. On the contrary, he adds that his poetry is “august and magnificent, both highly tragic and most harmonious, so that for its audience there is the fullest pleasure joined with sublimity and dignity” (§ 15).²⁷ What could be better? Other ancient sources testify to the opinion that Sophocles was more perfect than Aeschylus,²⁸ or even the absolute best in tragic poetry:²⁹ Aristotle’s *Poetics* surely gave a strong impulse to such critical trend.³⁰

A curious anecdote, attested by Chamaeleon (fr. 40a-b Wehrli), Plutarch (fr. 130 Sandbach), and other authors, represents Sophocles mocking Aeschylus in an almost patronizing tone: “My dear Aeschylus, you do the right thing (*i.e.*: *you write as you should*), but you are doing it without realizing it”.³¹ This alludes to Aeschylus’ supposed drunkenness, and in all likelihood is just a malicious story concocted by ancient gossip-mongers. Nevertheless, it reveals that Sophocles, criticizing Aeschylus without any kind of reverential fear, was no longer

26 Davidson (2012) 44; see also Castelli (2000) 34, 42–5, 62–7, 72–3.

27 Though affecting impartiality (§ 4), Dio sometimes reveals his ethical and emotional liking for Aeschylus: yet he acknowledges that Sophocles is, as far as style and dramatic technique are concerned, more accomplished. See Luzzatto (1983), esp. 64–77 and 130–7; Davidson (2012) 50.

28 *Life of Aeschylus* 16 = Soph. T 118 Radt. This *Life* probably draws on Peripatetic sources: see Podlecki (1969) 135–7; Fantuzzi (2007) 110; Frassoni (2013) 93–7.

29 To the texts quoted above (n. 8) add Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Verbal Composition* 24 (T 119 Radt), Dioscorides, *Palatine Anthology* 7.37.10 = HE 1606 (T 179 Radt, acutely elucidated by Fantuzzi (2007) esp. 109–16; see also Galán Vioque (2001) 280–6), and Statilius Flaccus, *Palatine Anthology* 9.98.5 = GPh 3825 (T 181 Radt); Valerius Maximus (8.7 ext. 12 = T 168 Radt) asserts that the *Oedipus Coloneus* in itself was enough “to preempt the glory of all poets in the same genre”. Wright (2012) 582 is basically right when he writes that “responses to Sophocles’ work seem to have been unanimous and uncontroversial, as if his pre-eminence was such that no further discussion was deemed necessary”. For a partial exception, see Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory* 10.1.67 (T 124 Radt): “Sophocles and Euripides differ in style, but it is much disputed as to which is the best poet”: see Castelli (2000) 43–4.

30 On Aristotle’s preference for Sophocles, see Wright (2012) 595–6. When the philosopher says that Euripides is “the most tragic of poets” (*Poetics* 1453a 29–30), he does not refer to his overall skill (in fact, he adds “though he does not manage everything else well”), but only to his frequent avoidance of happy ends: both Castelli (2000) 75–6 and Davidson (2012) 45 discuss the passage effectively.

31 T 52a–d Radt. See Davidson (2012) 41–2.

considered inferior to him: and that the opposition between a bibulous poet and a sober one—preluding to the well-known contrast between ‘Homeric’ lovers of wine and ‘Callimachean’ water-drinkers, attested in Hellenistic and Imperial epigram³²—points to an idea of measure and self-control that will become the trademark of Sophocles’ image.

Sweet Verses, Lovely Manners

As a matter of fact, the causes of such enthusiasm for Sophoclean tragedy are not what we could expect. 20th-century scholarship and literary criticism have accustomed most readers of Greek drama to identify the distinctive feature of Sophocles’ theatrical output, and one of his major achievements, with his ‘tragic heroes’: “remarkable leading characters of fiery passion and immovable bravery, determined valour and iron firmness”.³³ Ancient readers were not so much concerned with that. Tragic heroism is seldom mentioned in texts praising Sophocles: the only relevant passage, and not a very telling one, may be Statillius Flaccus, *Palatine Anthology* 9.98.6 = *GPh* 3826 (T 181 Radt), where the poet is said “to speak with his heroes’ very mouths” (αὐτοῖς ἡρώων φθεγξάμενον στόμασι).³⁴ Remarkably indeed, some ancient sources associate him with Homer, to the point that the Academic philosopher Polemon, ‘fond of Sophocles’ (φιλοσοφοκλῆς; Diog. Laert. 4.20 = T 144 Radt), according to both the *Suda* and Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of the Philosophers*, ventured to affirm that “Homer was an epic Sophocles, and Sophocles a tragic Homer” (T 115 Radt). Has this comparison to do with heroic characters? Not necessarily so: if Aristotle, *Poetics* 1448a 25–7, remarked that Homer and Sophocles “both imitate superior men”, in *Life of Sophocles* 20 we read that Sophocles “delineates characters, embellishes his verses, and uses contrivances in a masterly way, reproducing Homer’s charm” (χάρις). In other words, what the two poets have in common is literary technique and unrivalled skill. Sophocles’ ‘Homeric’ features emerge in form no less than in content.³⁵

32 See Asper (1997) 128–34; Albani (2002), with bibliography; Hunter in Fantuzzi/Hunter (2004) 448–9.

33 Markantonatos (2012a) 1. Bibliography on this topic is immense: Knox (1957) and (1964) remain pivotal.

34 Echoing, as commentators know, Dioscorides 7.411.5–6 = *HE* 1595–6 ὦ στόμα πάντων / δεξιόν, ἀρχαίων ἦσθαι τις ἡμιθέων, “O powerful mouth, you belonged with the ancient demi-gods” (on Aeschylus: the text is quite uncertain).

35 Eduard Fraenkel said “Among the books I dream of, there is *De Aeschylo et Sophocle Homeri discipulis*” (Fraenkel (2007) 46–7, see also (1977) 15; translation mine). On Aeschylus we have Sideras (1971), supplemented by Garson (1985), and, on the *Seven against Thebes*,

The mention of χάρις, ‘charm’ or ‘grace’, puts us on the right track. What ancient readers most admired of Sophocles was his polished, charming style.³⁶ From their point of view, the poet from Colonus was ‘sweet’ (ἡδύς, γλυκύς, μελιχρός, and the like),³⁷ so that he eventually gained the nickname ‘Bee’ (μέλιττα: an usual metaphor for poets and even prose writers³⁸). The very Aristophanes declared, in some lost plays of his, that “his mouth was anointed with honey like a cup” (fr. 598 Kassel/Austin = T 108 Radt) and “a honeycomb sat on [his lips]” (fr. 679 K./A.), and a comic fragment of uncertain authorship³⁹ calls him “honeycomb of good-natured Muses” (fr. anon. 480 K./A.). Very few professional literary critics dwelt on his faults. Demetrius (*On Style* 114), possibly following Theophrastus (fr. 686 Fortenbaugh), quoted Sophocles fr. 611 Radt as an example of ‘frigidity’ (ψυχρόν); Plutarch (*On Listening* 45b = T 122 Radt) ascribed to him an “uneven quality of writing” (ἄνωμαλία);⁴⁰ and ‘Longinus’ asserted that Sophocles, like Pindar, “may achieve true sublimity, but sometimes fails completely” (*On the Sublime* 33.5 = T 121 Radt: at any rate, he declares that nobody would prefer to be Ion of Chius, faultless as he may be, rather than Sophocles).⁴¹ But ‘Longinus’ and Plutarch (or his source) were swimming against the tide: other writers do not ascribe to Sophocles either sublimity or failure, just perfection and grace—a tremendously over-simplified view of his multiform style. Philostratus, in his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (8.7 = T 166 Radt), even makes him a new Orpheus subduing forces of nature with his song: “Sophocles the Athenian, who is said to have charmed the winds too, when they were blowing unseasonably”. A fictitious epitaph by Simias of Rhodes is worth quoting in full:

ἡρέμ’ ὑπὲρ τύμβοιο Σοφοκλέος, ἡρέμα, κισσέ,
 ἐρπύροις χλοερούς ἐκπροχέων πλοκάμους,
 καὶ πέταλον πάντη θάλλοι ρόδου ἢ τε φιλορρώξ
 ἄμπελος ὕγρὰ πέριξ κλήματα χευαμένη,

Zimmermann (2004); on Sophocles and Homer, both Davidson (2006) and Schein (2012) are very valuable papers, but much more remains to do.

36 This applies to many modern Hellenists as well. “The style of Sophocles has been profusely praised for its masterful supremacy—and rightly so”: thus Markantonatos (2007) 29.

37 See T 108–14, 133, 178, 180 Radt, discussed in Mauduit (2001).

38 See *Suda* σ 815 Adler = T 2 Radt: further parallels and bibliography in Telò (2005) 265–6 nn. 4–5.

39 Possibly by Aristophanes as well, as Bonanno (2005) argues.

40 On Demetrius’ passage, see Castelli (2000) 46–7; Marini (2007) 218–20. On Plutarch’s, Hillyard (1988) 195; Castelli (2000) 55–6.

41 See Castelli (2000) 54–9; Scodel (2012) 26.

εἵνεκεν εὐμαθίης πινυτόφρονος, ἣν ὁ μελιχρὸς
ἤσκησεν Μουσῶν ἄμμιγα καὶ Χαρίτων.

Gently over the tomb of Sophocles, gently may you creep, O ivy, pouring out your green curls, and may the petals of the rose bloom everywhere, and the grape-loving vine that spreads around her soft tendrils, on account of the wise learning that the honey-sweet poet practised in company with the Muses and the Graces.

(*Palatine Anthology* 7.22 = *HE* 3286–91: T 178 Radt)

Muses and Graces together will later become the trademark of Meleager, who mentions them in all three of his self-epitaphs.⁴² But the source of both Simias and Meleager was the second stasimon of Euripides' *Heracles*, where the chorus declares "I will not cease to mix the Graces with the Muses" (673–5: οὐ παύσομαι τὰς Χάριτας ταῖς Μούσαισιν συγκαταμειγνύς).⁴³ The ivy will creep gently on the tomb of the gentle Sophocles, whose 'sweetness' and 'grace' is celebrated appropriating a markedly Euripidean imagery.

Such opinions about the grace of Sophocles' poetry may have influenced, and in turn have been influenced by, the interest in some aspects of his biography. One more thing that we learn from Aristophanes' *Frogs* is that "he was good-natured here, and is good-natured there" (in the Underworld: line 82, ὁ δ' εὐκόλος μὲν ἐνθάδ', εὐκόλος δ' ἐκεῖ). This was surely true: Aristophanes could not lie to an audience of Athenian citizens who had been knowing Sophocles first-hand for decades. But ancient sources insisted very much on Sophocles' 'easy-going' attitude. According to the *Life of Sophocles*, "he was so charming that everyone loved him in every circumstance" (7): in fact his fellow citizens must have loved him a lot, since Ister the Callimachean (*FGrHist* 334 F 38, quoted at *Life of Sophocles* 17) informs us that "on account of his virtue, the Athenians decreed annual sacrifices in his honor" (this may or may not have to do with the tradition about his heroisation:⁴⁴ but the text of the *Life* explicitly says δι' ἀρετήν, 'on account of his virtue', not δι' εὐσέβειαν, '... of his devotion'). At any rate, it is not by chance that Sophocles' good nature became commonplace

42 *Palatine Anthology* 7.417–9 = *HE* 3984–4007: here the 'Graces' allude to Meleager's imitation of Menippean satire.

43 As Bond (1981) 238 notes, the Graces are frequently linked with the Muses: but the metaphor of the poet 'working with them both' or 'mixing them together' is less common. The Euripidean chorus influenced Callimachus as well: see Massimilla (1996) 228; Livrea (1997) 37–8; Harder (2012) 2.80–1.

44 On which see above, 2; cf. Lefkowitz (2012) 84.

in Hellenistic and later times: it has been rightly stressed that “the notion of charm and ease may also reflect ancient assessments of his style”.⁴⁵ Athenaeus (1.20e = T 28 Radt) reports that Sophocles was a handsome youth; that he led the chorus which sang the victory paeon after the battle of Salamis, “naked and anointed with oil”;⁴⁶ and that he proved very good at ball playing when he interpreted Nausicaa on the stage.⁴⁷ So far, so good. But would ancient sources have been so interested in transmitting such kind of information about the austere Aeschylus or the unsociable Euripides? As far as we know, no one ever charged Sophocles with effeminacy: yet these biographical details suited him much better than his two major colleagues. The same holds true for the anecdotes about Sophocles’ bent for the pleasures of love, both hetero- and homosexual.⁴⁸ Here, too, a kernel of truth surely lurks behind fiction: Cephalus, in Plato’s *Republic* (1.329bc = T 80a Radt), reports that he personally heard the old Sophocles rejoicing for having finally escaped from Eros’ tyranny.⁴⁹ And Ion of Chius, in a long excerpt from his *Visits Abroad* (*FGrHist* 392 F 6 = fr. 19 Federico/Valerio; T 75 Radt), declares to have been eye witness of the elaborate strategy by which he managed to kiss a reluctant slave-boy in front of a crowd of applauding, laughing fellow guests.⁵⁰ To be sure, ancient sources do not say that Sophocles was incontinent and obsessed with sex, like Alcibiades;⁵¹ they rather depict him as a *bon viveur* who enjoys the good things of life. This was consistent with the overall picture of Sophocles’ behavior, and probably aimed to contrast his easiness with Euripides’ alleged misogyny.⁵²

45 Lefkowitz (2012) 81.

46 Thus also *Life of Sophocles* 3. Scodel (2012) 27 rightly notes that “the details of the performance have a whiff of pederastic fantasy”.

47 See Meriani (2007) 37 n. 3; Scodel (2012) 29. Leo (1901) 23–4 believed that Athenaeus was drawing on a fuller version of the *Life of Sophocles*; Villari (1996) rather thinks that his source was Aristoxenus of Tarentum (4th–3rd century BC).

48 T 74–80 Radt: cf. Scodel (2012) 31.

49 See Caballero Sánchez (2004).

50 For a detailed commentary, see Federico/Valerio (2015) 212–22. On Ion’s interest in Sophocles, see also Maitland (2007)—though I would not subscribe to one or two views of hers: cf. Valerio (2010) 171–2. The *Visits Abroad* were a mine of first-hand information: “would the Goddess of Papyri allow me to choose, I would choose Ion’s *Ἐπιδημίαι*”, once said Fraenkel (1977) 58 (translation mine).

51 Littman (1970) collects ancient evidence, sometimes quite entertaining, on Alcibiades’ exuberant sexuality.

52 A reputation that Sophocles, according to Athenaeus (13.557e = T 58a Radt), was glad to belie. Sophocles’ mocking couplets addressed to Euripides on the theme of their erotic adventures (fr. 4 West² = *FGE* 1040–3) seem a later forgery: see Tyrrell (2005–6b); Davidson (2012) 42; Lefkowitz (2012) 180 n. 17.

In spite of such contrast, the commonplace of Sophocles' kind manners did not fail to shape the tradition about his attitude towards his younger rival. We are told that at Euripides' death, the old Sophocles entered on stage in a dark cloak, followed by his chorus and actors without their usual garlands;⁵³ and that at the very moment he received the sad news, he said "the whetstone of my poetry has perished",⁵⁴ thus implying that Euripides' opinion was highly valuable to him. At some moment, an unknown writer decided that Sophocles' kindness had to be reciprocated. An apocryphal text eventually saw the light of day: five letters ascribed to Euripides, one of them addressed to Sophocles, another one to the actor Cephisophon.⁵⁵ The former letter is a consolation piece for an (imaginary) shipwreck that Sophocles had suffered, losing the written texts of some tragedies of his ("who would not deem this a misfortune for the whole Greece?"), while the latter summarizes the relationship between the two poets: "I never hated him, always admired him", Euripides says, adding that he was initially suspicious of his colleague, but later they were glad to reconcile. "Nowhere else [...] is there so methodical a depiction of the poet as a social, sympathetic, and even compassionate personality as that which we encounter in the letters".⁵⁶ This surely was an attempt at rehabilitating Euripides: but the tradition on Sophocles is reflected here as well. His humanity was happily infectious.

Sophocles in the Middle Ages (and Beyond)

Though Euripides was the most widely read in the Hellenized world, not a single century in the history of Greek literature appears to have been oblivious to Sophocles. The Alexandrian scholars—Alexander of Aetolia, Aristophanes of Byzantium, Aristarchus, Theon, Didymus—engaged in textual criticism and exegesis of his plays:⁵⁷ it is a pity that almost nothing remains of all this learned work. His popularity, flourishing in both the East and the West,⁵⁸ did

53 *Life of Euripides* 2 = T 54 Radt: see Davidson (2012) 43.

54 *Gnomologium Vaticanum* 517 = T 57 Radt.

55 *Epist.* 2 and 5 = T 60–1 Radt: the full text in Gösswein (1975). On this peculiar epistolary cycle, see Hanink (2010), esp. 549–51 on the letters related to Sophocles.

56 Hanink (2010) 548.

57 Finglass (2012) 12–3, noting at p. 19 that "an investigation of Alexandrian scholarship on Sophocles and his fellow tragedians is a desideratum". On Aristarchus, see also Schironi (2004) 525–35; on the marginal notes of *POxy.* 1174, Antonopoulos (2013).

58 On Sophocles in the Roman world, see Holford-Strevens (1999): specifically on Sophoclean influence on Ovid, also Wright (2012) 593 and n. 50, with bibliography.

not decrease during the Imperial period down to Late Antiquity. In the 5th century AD, the grammarian Horapollon wrote a commentary (now lost) on his tragedies;⁵⁹ Nonnus and his followers knew Sophoclean poetry very well.⁶⁰ The dramatist's glory did not fade in the Byzantine age. Needless to say, during the Middle Ages fewer Sophoclean texts were available even to the most appetent bookworms. It is possible that in the libraries of Constantinople, at least before the sack of the city during the Fourth Crusade (1204), scholars like John Tzetzes were still able to find a number of rare works from classical antiquity;⁶¹ but for the average reader, Sophoclean drama consisted of the seven plays that have come down to us.⁶² At any rate, those seven were quite widely known. The so-called 'Byzantine triad' (*Ajax*, *Electra*, *Oedipus Rex*) can boast the richest manuscript tradition, but also the remaining four have been preserved in a decent number of copies⁶³—no Sophoclean tragedy has survived in just one or two manuscripts (apart from very late, irrelevant copies), as happened, for instance, to Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* and *Suppliants* or to Euripides' 'alphabetical' plays.⁶⁴ John Tzetzes appears to have had some interest in Sophoclean questions;⁶⁵ Eustathius of Thessalonica quoted or mentioned Sophocles very often;⁶⁶ later scholars, above all Thomas Magister, Manuel Moschopoulos, and Demetrius Triclinius, studied his tragedies with great interest and ingenuity⁶⁷—note that the Triclinian recension remained the standard

59 *Suda*, ω 159 Adler. On Horapollon and his family, see Miguélez Caverio (2008) 7–10.

60 See Hernández de la Fuente (2004) and Espinar (2004); on Nonnus' imitation of the first stasimon of *Oedipus at Colonus*, also Accorinti (2004) 29–33.

61 On this much disputed point, see Magnelli (2003) 193–202.

62 Less than 7% of his total poetical output, as Finglass (2012) 10 remarks.

63 See the useful Table 2 in Avezzù (2012) 54.

64 Avezzù (2012) and Finglass (2012) provide excellent assessments of Sophocles' textual transmission. Turyn (1952) and Dawe (1973–8) remain pivotal. More recent surveys include Avezzù (2003a) and (2008), and Finglass (2011) 59–67; on single manuscripts, see also Hecquet-Devienne (1994); Arnesano (1999); Speranzi (2006); Tessier (2006); Stefec (2009); Giannachi (2010); Scattolin (2012); Parenza (2014). On Sophoclean papyri, Daris (2003); Savignago (2003) and (2008) 69–133; Giannachi (2007), and especially Finglass (2013).

65 As Scattolin (2003) 315–8 demonstrates.

66 See Makrinos (2013).

67 On Thomas, see Bianconi (2005) 81–4; Avezzù (2012) 54–5. On Moschopoulos, Turyn (1949) is still very important, though his views have been partly confuted by later research: see Avezzù (2012) 55. On Triclinius, after Aubreton (1949), see Bianconi (2005) 100–4 and, more recently, Tessier (2015), with up-to-date bibliography and an excellent edition of his metrical scholia on four tragedies (the Byzantine triad and the *Antigone*): cf. Bianconi (2006) and Giannachi (2009).

text for centuries, until Richard François Philippe Brunck finally renounced such faith in his 1786 edition.⁶⁸ Many writers of ‘iambic trimeters’ (in fact, dodecasyllables) imitated Sophocles’ style and diction.⁶⁹

Once again, our poet is mainly praised for his ‘sweet’ verses. In the 14th century, Macarius Chrysocephalus included in his collection of proverbs “*Sophoclean songs*: this applies to those who speak most sweetly: Sophocles’ songs are in fact very sweet” (7.79, II p. 209 Leutsch-Schneidewin = T 113c Radt);⁷⁰ four centuries earlier, John Geometres depicted Sophocles “revealing bitter things in sweet words”.⁷¹ The 12th-century scholar Gregory of Corinth, in the final section of the surviving part of his treatise *On Style*, recommends that writers of iambic poetry imitate “George of Pisidia as the primary model; among the more recent, Callicles, Ptochoprodromus, and similar authors; among the ancient, the Theologian, Sophocles, apart from his poetic idioms, the clearest passages of Lycophron, and works of the same kind” (42.277–82 Donnet).⁷² That Sophocles’ trimeters have, on the whole, less resolved feet than Aeschylus’ or Euripides’,⁷³ thus appearing more similar to the Byzantine dodecasyllable, may partly account for such preference. Yet the mention of the ‘poetic idioms’ (τῶν ποιητικῶν ἰδιωμάτων) also suggests that Gregory “may have had some feeling for the feature of Sophoclean style which has exercised all competent students, the elasticity of the syntax”:⁷⁴ excluding the most peculiar features of his language, Sophocles is a model of harmony in style no less than in metre. In the same period, Nicephorus Basilakes, writing a rhetorical exercise (προγύμνασμα) on line 522 of the *Ajax* (χάρις χάριν γὰρ ἔστιν ἡ τίκτους’ αἰεί,

68 Finglass (2012) 17.

69 A detailed research on Sophocles’ influence on Byzantine poetry is badly needed.

70 The source is Aristophanes, *Peace* 531, and/or the ancient scholia to that passage (= T 113a–b Radt).

71 T 183 Radt. The couplet is nr. 156 in the catalogue of John’s poems offered by van Opstall (2008) 551–8. On the contrary, Michael Psellus, in the 11th century, confessed to warmer feelings for Euripides, asserting that Sophocles has “more dignified expressive tools” but is “not always graceful, and his rhythms not always well-sounding”: see Dyck (1986) 42–5, with his commentary at p. 59.

72 Donnet (1967) 323. The ‘Theologian’ is, as usually in Byzantine writers, Gregory of Nazianzus; ‘Ptochoprodromus’ clearly refers to Theodore Prodromus’ iambic poems in classicizing style, not to the vernacular poems in political verse—whose ascription to Theodore remains doubtful: see Hörandner (1974) 65–7; Eideneier (1991); Alexiou (1999); Egea (2001).

73 See Ceadel (1941); Schein (1979) 23–6, 43–5, and 77; West (1982) 85; on Euripides, also Cropp/Fick (1985), esp. p. 5.

74 Wilson (1996) 187.

“it is always one kindness that begets another”),⁷⁵ embarks in a twofold praise of Sophocles, on both formal and ethical grounds: the poet “cared for the grace of his verses” (τοῦ μέτρου τὴν χάριν ἐτήρησε: note the word-play on χάρις, both ‘kindness’ and ‘grace’), “refused adultery and rapes of women and all the other foolishness of myth”, and “directing his tongue towards piety, did not offend the gods nor pervert the youth driving them to licentiousness” (Aristophanes’ well known invectives against Euripides clearly resound here). To sum up,

τὸ τῆς ἐπωνυμίας σοφὸν ἔργοις αὐτοῖς ἐβεβαίωσε, τοῦτο τοῖς περὶ τραγωδίας γενόμενος, ὃ τοῖς περὶ ποίησιν Ὅμηρος.

he confirmed with his very actions the wisdom [*sophon*] inherent in his name [*Sophocles*],⁷⁶ becoming for the tragedians what Homer had been for (epic) poets.

Nicephorus probably echoes Polemon’ famous statement about Sophocles as “a tragic Homer”.⁷⁷ But for the Byzantine writer, this opinion has strong moral implications as well: from Sophocles’ plays, just as from the Homeric poems, you can learn virtue no less than literature.⁷⁸ The Greek humanist Janus Lascaris (1445–1534) holds the same view in the last lines of his encomiastic epigram on Sophocles:

πολλὰ τεῶν ἀρετῶν σεμνώματα· ἔν δὲ μέγιστον,
κρείσσονας ἡμερίους ἔπλασας ἢ φύσις,
λῆμά τε γενναῖον λαοῖς πόρες.

Your virtues shine in many ways, but this is the most important of all: you created men greater than nature does, and you gave people a noble spirit.
(*Epigram* 42.13–5 Meschini)⁷⁹

⁷⁵ *Progymn.* 25, ed. Pignani (1983) 104–9.

⁷⁶ For the word-play, cf. the alleged iambic oracle on Sophocles, Euripides, and Socrates (420 Parke-Wormell = T 106 Radt) and the anonymous epigram in ms. Laur. plut. 32.9 (T 184 Radt).

⁷⁷ See above, 8.

⁷⁸ See Castelli (2000) 81–2.

⁷⁹ Meschini (1976) 62–5, with her commentary at 151–3. It is a book epigram that Lascaris added to his 1518 edition of the Sophoclean scholia.

Recent imitations of classical Greek poetry are a minor, yet not wholly irrelevant, chapter in the reception of Sophocles. Modern Hellenists too, just like their Byzantine forebears, may find themselves under the spell of his style. Among them was the great Girolamo Vitelli (1849–1935), father and tutelary deity of Italian papyrology, who was also singularly gifted in composing Greek verse. In his early years, before turning to the papyri, he worked on Aeschylus and above all on Euripides, an author he especially loved:⁸⁰ yet his elegant iambic trimeters were “Sophoclean in rhythm, language, and style”, to the point that Sophocles “had become his own flesh and blood”.⁸¹ A more recent instance comes from Cambridge, where a group of former pupils produced few years ago a miscellaneous volume in honor of James Diggle (the world’s authority on Euripides). One of the contributors presented the honorand with “A Dramatic Fragment”:⁸² a little masterpiece of Greek composition in 318 trimeters and six dactylic hexameters, full of tragic echoes and allusions⁸³ skilfully blended with original phrases. The prologue is uttered by the ghost of Ajax, who has left the Underworld for his native Salamis and laments over Euripides’ hermitical life. Then Sophocles arrives, together with a chorus of Athenian citizens, begging his fellow poet to come back home. Euripides refuses, explaining the cause of his despair: in a dream, he saw his plays destroyed by fire and lost forever. Athena, as *deus ex machina*, eventually reveals him the truth:⁸⁴ after innumerable years, a man will come—a barbarian, yet immensely gifted and learned, loved by the Muses and by his pupils as well—who will restore the text of his

80 For an intelligent evaluation of the pre-papyrological decades of Vitelli’s academic career, see Valerio (forthcoming). Giorgio Pasquali in 1934 extolled the old Vitelli as “the greatest living authority on Greek poetry” (reprinted in Pasquali (1952) xx: translation mine).

81 Pasquali (1964) 8 (translation mine); see Magnelli (2011) 89 n. 45. The poems are collected in Vitelli (1927).

82 McKeown (2011).

83 Just a few instances: ll. 25–6 μελαμβανοῦς . . . Ταρτάρου ~ Aeschylus(?), *Prometheus Bound* 219; l. 46 ἀβύσσοις χάσματος ~ Euripides, *Phoenician Women* 1605; ll. 50–1 κρότημα Σισύφειον αἰμυλωτάτη / εὐγλωσσία ~ [Euripides], *Rhesus* 498–9 (also echoing Euripides, *Cyclops* 104); l. 93 πόδ’ οὐκέτ’ αἶρω κοῦφον ~ Sophocles, *Antigone* 224; ll. 98–9 ἅπαντα γὰρ βρότεια λανθάνει μακρὸς / χρόνος μαραινῶν ~ Sophocles, *Ajax* 714; l. 123 ταύτην ἀφιῇται νῆσον εἰς εὐάμπελον (Salamis) ~ Euripides, fr. 530.3 Kannicht; l. 159 ἀπάταισι δόλιος μηχανορραφοῖς ~ Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* 387–8; ll. 282–3 ἦ τ’ Ἀλεξάνδρου πόλις / ἄπολις πεσεῖται ~ Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 457 (and Plato, *Laws* 6.766d); l. 292 παρ’ ἐσχάτοις γὰρ κρασπέδοις Εὐρωπίας ~ Euripides, fr. 381 Kannicht; the alliteration σώσει σε σὴν τε at l. 311 clearly evokes Euripides’ notorious ἔσωσά σ’, ὡς Ἰσσαν Ἑλλήνων ὅσοι (*Medea* 476). The learned reader will delight in finding out many more.

84 Note that in Sophocles’ *Ajax* Athena appeared in the prologue, not at the end. Modern scholars too can practise contrastive imitation (*oppositio in imitando*).

tragedies and grant him the immortal glory he deserves.⁸⁵ Both Sophocles (ll. 192, 206, 210–1) and the chorus (ll. 138–40) highly praise Euripides' genius, and in turn the poet of the *Bacchae*, without envy, willingly acknowledges Sophocles' qualities:

ἦδιστα γάρ σοι Φοῖβος, ὥς ἂν' Ἑλλάδα
ἴσασι πάντες, δῶρ' ἔδωκε καὶ τέχνης
ταμίαν σ' ἔθηκε μουσικῆς σοφώτατον.

Phoebus, as everyone knows in Greece, granted you the sweetest gifts,
and made you the most skilled dispenser of the art of the Muses.

(ll. 200–2)

Modern readers, especially academic ones, are fully equipped to appreciate the many virtues of Euripidean poetry. Yet for some of them—all the more when they speak with the voice of a 5th-century Athenian playwright—Sophocles remains 'the sweetest'.⁸⁶

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85 Ll. 263–4 (Sophocles speaking): "If my conjecture is correct, 'O Diggle, Diggle!' appears to be a sacred formula among the barbarians" (ῥῆμ' ἐστὶν ἱερὸν, εἴπερ εὖ στοχάζομαι, / ' ὦ Δίγγλε, Δίγγλε' βαρβάρους).

86 Not so for Richard Porson, who preferred Euripides' (alleged) *inaffectata simplicitas* to Sophocles' *artificiosa sedulitas*: see Clarke (1937) 38. In April 1796, he sent to *The Morning Chronicle* a Greek iambic fragment purportedly found by a friend of his in a scrap of ancient parchment and belonging to some lost Sophoclean tragedy: twelve lines "which all critics will concur with me, I doubt not, in determining to be the genuine production of the ancient dramatist. His characteristics are simplicity and sententiousness". Had he changed his mind about Sophoclean style? Not at all: those lines were in fact Porson's Greek translation of an English nursery poem, *Three Children Sliding on the Ice*. The text in Kidd (1815) 154–7.

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PART 1

The Tragedies of War



Ajax

Martina Treu

Sophocles' Ajax is a tragedy of contrasts and contradictions.¹ The playwright creates ambiguous characters, whose virtues and vices may be interpreted and reprised in reception with a striking variety of echoes. Such ambiguities characterize the hero himself and his central act—a most impressive suicide—which literally splits the drama in two parts, very different from one another.² Also, a wide range of problems is displayed since the opening scene (which I define a 'metatheatrical prologue').³

In the prologue, the goddess Athena plays the role of a director, onstage: she gives directions and instructions to her protégé Odysseus, and to each of us, spectators of an awkward, repulsive, macabre show. If we remember that the Greek word 'theater' comes from the verb "theaomai" ('I watch') this scene may be elected as a symbol of the ambivalent effect of Greek tragedy: a mix of fear, horror and pleasure, based on the power of vision.⁴ Athena's words open the drama, and

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- 1 I thank Anna Beltrametti, Patrick Boyde, Maria Luisa Catoni, Etta Chatterjee, Sotera Fornaro, Patrick Finglass, Mary-Kay Gamel, George Kovacs, Emilio Isgrò, Rosanna Lauriola, Wendy Lloyd, Enrico Medda, Giovanni Nahmias, Francesco Orioli, Vincenzo Pirrotta, Gherardo Ugolini, Raffaella Viccei. Special thanks to the Staff of Fondazione INDA, for their help and care in keeping ancient drama alive (particularly for the first tragedy I ever saw live, at the Greek Theater of Syracuse: *Ajax*).
 - 2 On this specific aspect (but also for a synthetic survey on the play, of its sections, and connecting themes), see Finglass (2012): "Ajax kills himself at line 865, when the play still has some 40% of its length to run" (p. 60), and later: "Sophocles thus brings his audience to a complex view of his protagonist, which ignores neither his virtues nor his vices. He achieves this in part by the diptych structure, in which the first part emphasizes the darker side of Ajax's character, and the latter part its more positive aspects" (p. 63). Most examples in the history of reception underline one side rather than the other, and thus fail to show the complexity of the play.
 - 3 The prologue is crucial, in ancient as in modern works of poetry and literature, from epic to tragedy, and to comedy: about this, see Treu (2016) online at <http://www.lessicodelcomico.unimi.it/prologo/> (accessed 1.4.2016).
 - 4 In order to understand this scene, we must recall the importance of 'vision' in Greek theater, as in other fields of culture, science and knowledge in general. Most summaries of the plot (regarding *Ajax*, but also other tragedies) do not respect the exact sequence of events, with the opening scene and the flashback, but restore the chronological order of facts and begin

literally create the space we are in. There is no stage curtain, in Greek theater, but we feel as we lurked inside a most private space: the tent, which served as a house to Ajax for many years in the Greek camp.

*There, Odysseus comes looking for his rival: Ajax the defender, “the bulwark of Achaeans” (such definition recurs, for instance, in Homer, *Iliad* 3. 229; 7. 211), had challenged him in order to win the arms of the dead Achilles, as a trophy for the most valuable soldier. The Greek Army judged both, Odysseus won. The defeated Ajax felt the judgment as a betrayal. Overnight, the herd animals of Greeks were slaughtered. A witness reported that the killer is Ajax. Odysseus cannot believe it.⁵ He wants to see Ajax with his own eyes. His gaze becomes ours.⁶ His surprise is our surprise: Ajax stands, inside the tent, covered in sweat and blood, among massacred animals.*

Athena reveals with cruel joy what happened the night before: Ajax, enraged, planned to kill the Greek generals while asleep (anger, revenge, isolation, and hate towards the comrades-in-arms are all key aspects in the reception of this play, as I shall show). Athena protected the Greeks, by putting on Ajax a spell of madness (another key aspect): a dark fog enveloped his mind while he slaughtered and tortured animals, thinking them soldiers. In the prologue, Athena provokes Ajax, exciting his madness, and invites Odysseus to laugh at his enemy’s shame and rejoice in his victory. He refuses. When Ajax recovers from his madness, slowly and painfully, he acknowledges what he actually did. He feels so ashamed that he cannot survive such dishonor. The arguments and pleas of his mates (the Chorus) and of Tecmessa (the slave who lives with him as a wife, and the mother of their son Eurysaces) cannot influence his decision—even if, for a moment, it seems that he had changed his mind. Alone, on a desert shore, he will kill himself by throwing himself on his sword: a doomed gift of Hector.⁷

by telling the events of the days and night before. In doing so, unfortunately, they do not pay full tribute to the dramatic technique of this unique prologue, based on the gradual disclosure of the truth.

- 5 The ancient audience, on the contrary, knows Ajax and his story, although in different versions, well before Sophocles’ tragedy was staged: see below, 32–5.
- 6 This is a momentous element of Greek epic, tragedy, and reception: see, for instance, the title of a celebrated movie by Theo Anghelopoulos starring Harvey Keitel (*Ulysses’ Gaze*, 1995, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DaUEulIEBV8> accessed 1.18. 2016).
- 7 I note, incidentally, that Hector himself was killed by Achilles, tied to his carriage and pulled around Troy’s walls with the very same belt which Ajax gave to Hector, after their duel, as a mutual gift. Hector, like Ajax, is also doomed to death by Achilles’ armor: he obtains it by killing Patroclus, and he wears it till he dies. Other resonances between the fates of the two rivals may be seen by comparing Ajax’s dialogue with Tecmessa, here, with Hector’s farewell to Andromache in Homer, *Iliad* 6. 390–496.

In the second part of the play, Ajax's half-brother Teucer arrives at the Greek camp, and takes care of the dead man: he fights for his burial and rehabilitation against Agamemnon and Menelaus, with the surprising help of Odysseus. The latter not only recognizes his rival's credits, but he claims and gets Ajax the honor he deserves. And yet Teucer will not allow Odysseus at the funeral rites, because Ajax's hate is stronger than his own death.

In Literature

Our summary, although necessarily short, lists the essential themes and problems of such a complex and ambivalent text. It is also a necessary introduction to the quite peculiar tradition of *Ajax* among Sophocles' dramas. At first sight, *Ajax* appears less popular than other tragedies (such as *Antigone*, or *Oedipus*), but its reception history is full of surprises, as a detailed analysis shows, along with the most recent studies on this tragedy.⁸

Indeed, Ajax is the core of a galaxy of stories, passions, and conflicts: from the top honors and glory to a black hole of madness, chaos, and despair. The occurrences of the contradictory aspects shared by the character in literature and arts are so rich, various, and heterogeneous, that it would be impossible—and pointless—to cite all the artists and works involved. Therefore, in the limited space of this chapter, I shall synthetically point at the main trends and recurrent themes in the reception by carefully selecting samples of various *genres* of literature and art (such as poems and novels, vases and statues, comics and dramas), with a special focus on adaptations and productions in

8 The tragedy, as I shall see, is actually the object both of a growing number of adaptations and performances, and of increasing studies, including recent conferences (such as *Staging Ajax's suicide* at Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa, Italy, November 2013). There were also interesting papers on *Ajax* delivered at the 2014 Classical Association Annual Meeting (Nottingham, UK) and at a Leiden conference (May 2016), which I took into due account in this chapter. Among the graduate students I must mention Etta Chatterjee (King's College, London) who works under the supervision of Prof. Edith Hall: she delivered a paper at the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD) 2015 undergraduate conference ("Staging suicide: the necessity of onstage suicide in Sophocles' *Ajax*", 29 June 2015); she is currently writing a thesis which I was allowed to discuss with her: *Ajax—A study of the impact and reception of the myth of Ajax and Sophocles' Ajax in western culture*. See also, in Markantonatos (ed.) (2012), the last chapters on the reception of Sophocles' tragedies in ancient times (pp. 579–99), his influence on modern literature and arts (pp. 601–18) and onstage (pp. 641–60). For other studies and further readings, see below, 70–2.

the “on stage” section.⁹ The last part of the chapter will be dedicated precisely to the surprising ‘boom’ of *Ajax*’s recent popularity which—especially in the past twenty years—exceeds previous responses, with a huge number of staged readings, adaptations, and performances: not only in theaters, but in many different places such as universities, military camps, political and symbolic venues (e.g., the United States Pentagon). Ultimately, on the ground of my survey, Ajax appears not only a very popular character, inside and outside theaters, but his fame goes beyond Homer and Sophocles, thanks to commercials, football teams, software and military items. The multiplicity and diversity of occurrences of his name worldwide are well attested on the Internet.¹⁰

I have selected those case studies which, in my opinion, show at best the extraordinary variety of themes and tones, including parodies and burlesque, with allusions to comedy and satyr drama.¹¹ Even in serious genres, such as tragedies, poems, operas, a cry of pain may become a laugh. In Sophocles’ drama and in its reception, Ajax does not change his mind: this is his nature and his strength. And yet the defender turns into offender, friends become enemies, and former rivals (Odysseus) act as friends.¹² In the prologue, the great hero appears as a villain covered in blood, in a grotesque and absurd comedy.

Overall, pain rules. The very name is connected, by Ajax himself, to the concepts of agony, pain, sorrow, and grief. Indeed, dishonor and disgrace mark the destiny of two notorious heroes who share this name: ‘this’ Ajax, the son of Telamon, also called “The Great” or “The Greater”—for his giant height, and his relevant role in the epic cycle—must not be confused with the ‘other’ Ajax, a son of the Locrian king Oileus (consequently called the Lesser). They both take part in the Trojan War. In different ways, they call on themselves the wrath of gods, particularly Athena, who causes their ruin and their death.¹³

9 See below, 55–6.

10 About the reception of Ajax, in popular culture, see the last section below, 66–9.

11 For examples, see below, 36–41, 45–8, 64–6.

12 See Finglass (2012) 67–70 and especially note 41: “Cf. Knox (1961) 10 = (1979) 133: ‘in time, friends turn into enemies and enemies into friends. The *Ajax* itself is a bewildering panorama of such changed and changing relationships’. See also Goldhill (1986) 85–88”.

13 Ajax the Lesser, too, was a valiant warrior but despised the gods’ favor (see Homer, *Iliad* 2. 527, and 23. 574). He was hated and persecuted by Athena for his indecent and sacrilegious behavior, and particularly for his violence against Cassandra, whom he allegedly raped in her temple (see the prologue of one of the most famous tragedies of the third major Attic playwright of the 5th century, Euripides’ *Trojan Women*, 69–86); Athena persecuted him and caused his shipwreck on the way back home. Still alive, he blasphemed against the gods and was finally killed by Poseidon (Homer, *Odyssey* 4. 499–511).

The goddess herself, as mentioned above, dominates the prologue of Sophocles' *Ajax* with her anger, her cruel joy, and the madness she inspires. Yet the precise cause of her wrath is significantly mentioned in elusive ways not only here, but also later in the drama (*Ajax* 748–83).¹⁴ The suspense is carefully built: gradually, we get to know what happened, and we learn that the origin of Ajax's misfortune is his arrogant behavior towards Athena and all gods. When he left home, heading to Troy, his father Telamon advised him to triumph with the gods' help. Ajax refuses: he rejects the gods. He counts only on his own forces. He aims at winning alone, by himself. It has been observed that the character of Ajax, as portrayed in the archaic Greek epic and poetry, represents in many ways the heroic age. Nevertheless, I argue that in this tragedy Sophocles creates a new Ajax, a 'self-made man', by modifying his story and his behavior. He has been defined by critics as "the first modern hero of Greek tragedy" and "the first full-length portrait of a tragic hero in Western literature".¹⁵

Furthermore, similar definitions, like most opinions on *Ajax* in general, must be related to the opposite attitudes shown by Ajax and Odysseus, since Sophocles' prologue, towards Athena and all the other gods. The former refuses the gods' help, and loses. The latter plays according to their rules, and wins. This opposition, too, is a crucial element in Sophocles' play, and in its reception. We must never forget that the relationship between the two men, and the goddess, is a heritage not only of the heroic age, depicted in the epic cycle, but also of another context: 5th century Athens.

Any short history of reception must start from here, from the conditions of performance and the basic elements that contribute to a wider picture: first of all, the relationship between the author, his audience, and his judges. When the tragedy was first staged, Sophocles was judged by his peers, in a community theater: each drama was created to be delivered by three actors and a chorus at a competition. Each time, Sophocles had to fight for the first place, as his main character does: in such a challenge, the first impression is crucial. He had no second chance to impress the judges, if he wanted to beat the other tragic writers and their directors. He had to work hard, by innovating and reformulating myths, characters, and plots, as other ancient and modern poets did before and after him. He was, first of all, a man of theater, if not a director himself, as Athena is onstage. The goddess, Odysseus, and Ajax, before being characters, are three *actors*. With them Sophocles, right from the prologue, created a

14 It has been remarked that delay is a crucial element of the plot, and that "such delayed revelation is characteristic of Homeric narrative": see Finglass (2012), 66 n. 24.

15 See respectively, for the former statement Kott (1987) 53, for the latter Whitman (1951) 64. See also Finglass (2012) 71.

perfect stage-machine, carefully built to impress audiences and judges in order to win. As in any prologue, all actors (tragic or comic) have one mission: to captivate the audience. Here they surely do, with the opening of the tent, the gradual discovery of the truth, the madness scene and all that follows. Therefore, if Sophocles *is* Ajax in a way he is also Odysseus and Athena. With just three actors and a chorus he creates not only a complex text, but a complete show, rich of suspense, always in balance between opposite interpretations, ambiguous characters, and multiple layers of meanings. Sophocles, with all this, could sow a variety of seeds for reception. Beautiful flowers grew, in time, surprisingly different one from another.

In this chapter, since I focus on the reception of Sophocles' play, I shall leave in the background the tradition derived from other sources, equally involving Ajax and the Trojan History. The most significant ones, of course, are Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the so-called Epic Cycle, and in particular *Aethiopis* and *Little Iliad*, and fragments of lost dramas, such as a trilogy by Aeschylus, which focused on the so-called "judgment of the arms", two tragedies by Sophocles completing the story of Ajax's family (entitled *Teucer* and *Eurysaces*, respectively after the names of his half-brother and son), and other dramas dedicated to Ajax by younger playwrights, such as Carcinus II, Astydamas II, Theodectes (all dated 4th century BC), and Polemaeus (100 BC).¹⁶

Therefore, let us begin with the background: Sophocles knew well, as his audience did, the stories of Ajax and his family, and notably of his father Telamon. The birthplace of the whole family is very important in itself, for Sophocles and for Athens: Salamis (the island where Ajax was born and raised), is at the core of the Saronic Gulf, the very heart of Greece. Ajax the Greater was honored here, as a local pride, but also elsewhere (he was considered a mythical ancestor of a tribe of Athens). His glory is greatly due to the epic tradition: we know that he came to Troy with twelve ships (Homer, *Iliad*, 2. 557), fought the Trojans, and gained the honorable epithet of "the bulwark of Achaeans" (Homer, *Iliad* 3. 229; 6. 5; 7. 211). He was considered the second best among them, after Achilles. In the most widespread tradition he was also the latter's cousin, a sort of double of the best.¹⁷ Their two fates combined and intertwined. Their figures are often associated, in literature as in fine arts.¹⁸ Their

16 On Sophocles' lost plays see Post (1922) 5–12. See also the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama website (www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk) for a list of ancient and modern works, and their productions.

17 See Jebb (1907) IX–XVII for the bonds between Telamon and Peleus, and their implications.

18 See below, 48–51.

relationship (I define it as ‘complementarity’), is crucial not only in ancient times, but also in later reception.

Achilles may be described with the images of wrath and assault. He is an offence weapon, fast and lethal as his spear. Ajax, on the contrary, is first of all a defender. A famous passage of Homer’s *Iliad* (11. 544–74) depicting him facing the Trojan assault compares him to a lion and a donkey. This comparison seems to synthesize at best his “heroic combination of stubbornness and bigness: steadfast against the enemy, he is like a donkey in a grain field which even the blows of boys cannot drive out until he is ready to move in his own good time”.¹⁹ His symbol is a most peculiar shield, taller and bigger than the usual ones, which has a story on its own (see for instance Homer, *Iliad* 2. 768; 7. 199; 17. 128–37). Throughout the *Iliad*, when the Greek army is in danger, Ajax is the one who saves the situation: he protects the Greek fleet from the Trojan fire (Homer, *Iliad* 13. 46–80); he is among the ambassadors sent to Achilles in order to persuade him to come back to the battlefield (Homer, *Iliad* 9. 165–713); he fights Hector in a duel (Homer, *Iliad* 14. 402–32 and 7. 177–312); he carries away from the battlefield the corpses of Patroclus (Homer, *Iliad* 17. 128–37) and Achilles, as the lost poems of the epic cycle should have narrated, according to what we know.²⁰

In those poems, Achilles’ arms must be assigned to the ‘best’ warrior; Trojan prisoners are in charge of the judgment, and Odysseus wins. Enraged, Ajax kills the herd animals and kills himself. He is buried in a coffin, rather than cremated on a funeral pyre, because of his killing. Another lost poem named *Aethiopis* (five books) and attributed to the archaic epic poet Arctinus of Miletus (8th century BC?) should have included variants of the same elements: the judgment of the arms, the jury of Trojan prisoners, the killing of herd animals (apparently without madness), and the suicide. This version was probably the source of later poems, such as *Isthmian* 4. 57 by the great lyric poet Pindar (end of 6th century—first half of 5th century BC), although he reports different variants on the judgment in his *Nemean* 7. 24–7 and 8. 22–9.

By comparing these ancient sources, therefore, we may identify a crucial variant for Sophocles and further reception: in some versions of the myth,

19 Segal (1999) 148. Accordingly, in Sophocles’ tragedy *Agamemnon* compares Ajax to a big ox (*Ajax*, 1253–5): the concepts of stubbornness and bigness are also associated to Ajax in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* (see below, 38–41).

20 Among them, the *Little Iliad* and the *Aethiopis* allegedly gathered a few key elements of Ajax’s story, which Sophocles chose, remoulded, and changed. On both poems see Jebb (1907) IX–XVI, where the main sources of Sophocles’ *Ajax* are discussed: particularly, the comments on Homer, *Odyssey* 11. 543–64, and on Aristophanes’ *Knights*, 1056.

the Trojan prisoners are in charge of the judgment; in others the Greek soldiers, Ajax's comrades-in arms, assign the victory to Odysseus.²¹ This choice, of course, originates the fracture between former mates: the Greeks are responsible for the betrayal. This event provokes Ajax's alienation: the rupture of all the bonds which tied him to his comrades and made him strong (as he stressed in his own speech to Achilles: Homer, *Iliad* 9. 622–42). This betrayal leads to his isolation, which is a key element of Sophocles' character, and a solid basis for modern reception.

The same scheme is also recurrent in other tragedies, especially by Sophocles, built around a single hero: in *Philoctetes* (frequently associated with *Ajax* in the reception history) the main character, a wounded archer, is betrayed by his comrades in arms and abandoned in Lemnos (Sophocles, on purpose, depicts it as a desert island—as it was not—in order to exasperate and emphasize the loneliness, suffering, and despair of the hero). Compared to *Philoctetes*, *Ajax* adds more elements: alienation, madness, violence, and suicide.²² In this regard, we may argue that Sophocles highlighted and sharpened the most ambiguous features of Ajax, positive and negative, partly pre-existing in tradition, with the addition of new ones. He thus created a hybrid, complicated mixture that becomes a major cause of Ajax's popularity in reception, particularly in modern times, despite the most unpleasant aspects of the hero: i.e., his homicidal intents, his brutality towards animals, his insensitive and rude behavior towards Tecmessa. In Sophocles even the most clear and prominent feature of the Homeric Ajax is at stake: the defender becomes an offender. He threatens his own family, his comrades-in-arms, his friends.

This premise is essential to measure through Odysseus' gaze the distance between the pre-Sophoclean tradition and Sophocles' *Ajax*, starting with its prologue, in order to evaluate how innovative it is, and what impact it could have on Athenian spectators. We understand now why Ajax's rival is so surprised, shocked, and terrified: he sees that the Greeks' main defender has become a threat, a lethal weapon of offense. Ajax turns his strength against his people, kills innocent animals, menaces his own mates. This, again, is crucial

21 Later on, both traditions on the Trojan / Greeks as judges are still present: e.g., the Athenian philosopher Plato (5–4th century BC) in his *Apology of Socrates* (40e–41) blames the death of Ajax not only on the unfair treatment he received from his fellow Achaeans, but also on the machinations of an unjust Odysseus. A more recent source is *On Heroes* (*Heroicus* 35) by the Greek sophist Philostratus (1st–2nd century AD): see <http://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/3565>. See also Brillante (2012).

22 On *Philoctetes*, see below, 37, 43, 63.

for the reception history of *Ajax*. Odysseus sees his rival's madness and yet he pities him, and fights for his burial.

In the pre-Sophoclean tradition, their last encounter is a memorable one, in the underworld (Homer, *Odyssey* 11. 543–64). Odysseus meets Ajax, among other dead warriors, and tries to talk to him, as a sign of reconciliation. But Ajax, still angry and stubborn, refuses to speak or even to approach him: he stands obstinately on a side, in silence, isolated. These key elements will influence later reception, including Sophocles.

The playwright, in conclusion, creates a balance between two faces of Ajax: the bright side of *Iliad* and the 'dark side' of *Odyssey*.²³ The former is a portrayal of a brave warrior and a mighty defender. It is built on qualities (heroic temper, strength, and desire to protect) which date back to the pre-Sophoclean tradition and continue after Sophocles as well.²⁴ In this regard, the tragedy introduces those key elements that form what we may call the 'dark side': the judgment, felt as a betrayal, unchains the wildest aspects of human nature (anger, threat, violence, torture, and massacre).²⁵ When Athena intervenes by causing the madness, she saves her *protégé* Odysseus and the Greek army, but she condemns Ajax to something worse than death itself: failure, ridicule, and mockery. For the hero, the main consequences of his acts are the loss of conscience, honor, and his desire to live. Grief, isolation, agony, and suicide follow. Finally, the discussion over his honors and his burial evokes key aspects of Greek religion and culture which recur most frequently in literature and on stage, and specifically in Sophocles' dramas. In the second part of this tragedy

23 See Segal (1999) 120: "The impulse towards self-realization is both glorious ennoblement and a union with dark, self-destructive forces. In this shifting balance between two extremes lies the complexity of Sophoclean tragedy".

24 For instance, the epic poet Quintus Smyrnaeus (3–4th century AD) gave Homer's *Iliad* a 'sequel' in his poem *Posthomerica* ("After Homer"), and dedicated book 5 to the judgment of the arms and the suicide of Ajax. Even after the fall of the Roman Empire, the stories of the Trojan War were still very popular for centuries: for instance, the Latin prose chronicle *Historia destructionis Troiae* ("History of the Destruction of Troy"), by Guido delle Colonne (ca. 1210–after 1287), cites the duel between Hector and Ajax (15. 681–88). He inspired, in turn, later poems and romances all over Europe.

25 In this perspective, I recognize some key elements of such a 'double-sided' tradition in 'ambiguous' heroes of today, especially in comics (see below, 45–8): the interior struggle between Good and Evil may affect defenders (Captain America, The Shield) or defenders / offenders (Anakin Skywalker/Darth Vader in the *Star Wars* saga: see below, 68).

however (particularly in the debate over Ajax's burial) some critics have detected interesting elements of mockery and grotesque parody.²⁶

In the past, such 'comic' aspects have been despised and considered incongruous, not suitable to the gravity of tragedy. Instead, in my opinion, they are a key element in Sophocles and in its reception. They emerge, for instance, in the well-known portrait of Ajax by the great Latin poet Ovid (43 BC–18 AD) in a most celebrated poem, which widely influenced many later works: the *Metamorphoses* ("Transformations"), composed between 2 and 8 AD, just before the poet was exiled to Tomi, where he died. In the section of the poem devoted to Ajax (*Metamorphoses* 12. 624–13. 398) the judgment of the arms plays the greater part, while the suicide is only cited at the very end (13. 386–98). No influence of any god is mentioned. The matters at stake are honor, prestige, and power. The focus is on the debate, where Ovid recasts and expands a well-known formal pattern of dialogue (very popular not only in Attic tragedy, but in courthouses, and in most schools of rhetoric, where it was practiced from the Greek Sophistic movements till Ovid's time): the controversy of opposite speeches (*dissòì lògoi*).

Ovid's treatment of the story soon became a standard on its own in later reception, because of its clarity, synthesis, and cleverness.²⁷ The essential steps of the story are pictured with a visual, intense, and effective taste—made of sharp, and fast, brush strokes—which on one side recalls the iconography of ancient vases, on the other side somehow anticipates the cinema, at least

26 See Kott (1987) 59: "In no other tragedy by Sophocles are the opposites of human and unhuman so sharply contrasted". See also Finglass (2012).

27 The character of Ajax was popular in Latin culture well before Ovid: it is notable that Latin tragedies pertaining to Ajax, now lost, were written by important playwrights of early ages such as *Ajax Mastigophorus* ("Ajax the whip-bearer") by Livius Andronicus (240–204 BC), *Ajax* by Quintus Ennius (204–149 BC), two entitled *Armorum Iudicium* ("The judgment of the arms"), one by Marcus Pacuvius (2nd century BC) and one by Accius (1st century BC). Also, the same Emperor Augustus who condemned Ovid to exile attempted to write a tragedy on Ajax, but he erased it (literally): his hero "fell not on his sword, but upon a sponge", as referred by the Roman historian Svetonius (1st century–2nd century AD) in his "biography of Augustus" (*Life of Augustus*, 85). A possible reason for such attention to Ajax's story, particularly regarding the judgment of the arms, may be the symbolic meaning of the trophy: Achilles' arms are his heritage, a symbol of prestige and power. On this aspect, see Canfora (2014) who considers Athena's *protégé*, Odysseus, as a champion of 'political realism'. In later reception, too, the two heroes often become symbols of two separate worlds, the heroic age and the new era of 'Realpolitik': Odysseus is the only survivor, and the future. Ajax is the past: a lost world, a dinosaur. The latter comparison recurs, too, in the poem *Ajax Zum Beispiel* (*Ajax, for instance*) by Heiner Müller: see below, 43–5.

in my opinion. At the end of book 12, a short, dense, vivid, and poetic narration rapidly illustrates the death of Achilles, the rivalry between Ajax and Odysseus, both claiming his arms, and ultimately Agamemnon's decision (he will gather the Greek generals as a jury, who will listen to both arguments and then judge the case: 12. 624). Immediately afterwards, book 13 opens with the metatheatrical scene of the dispute: unlike Sophocles, Ovid does not include any god, or goddess, but he explicitly mentions Greek soldiers as spectators. On stage he puts just two actors, Ajax and Odysseus, and in their dialogue, he effectively summarizes both the positive and negative features of all the characters depicted by Sophocles. They are reduced to symbols: the action and the words, the strength and the brain. Needless to say, the latter wins: in just two verses, the Greeks assign the arms to Odysseus, and in a few more verses (380–395) the enraged Ajax plans and commits suicide with his sword, as “only Ajax can beat Ajax”. From his blood a red flower grows, the hyacinth, a symbol of Ajax's sorrows.²⁸

The entire episode is written in direct speech, besides the verses before and after the dispute. The two heroes speak, one after the other. Ajax begins. He is outraged, he says, at the mere thought that Odysseus dares to challenge him on the very shore where he, Ajax, fought the Trojan assault and saved the Greek ships. Ajax is proud to be a rude soldier, not a rhetorician, compared to Odysseus. But he asserts that his rival's fame is overestimated. Ajax demands, and deserves, his cousin's arms: he lists his noble ancestors, the family and friendship bonds with Achilles, and his own achievements in the Trojan War. Odysseus is depicted, instead, with the most negative features he shows in other Greek tragedies, such as *Philoctetes*, rather than in Sophocles' *Ajax*, where he reveals his pity and respect for his enemy. In Ovid, Ajax not only claims that he saved Odysseus' life, but he reports his rival's flaws, describing him as initially reluctant to go to war, cowardly, treacherous, devious, and responsible for many crimes.²⁹ Finally Ajax asks the Greeks to judge both rivals not by their words, but by their actions: let Achilles' arms be thrown in the battlefield. Whoever will bring them back will gain them as a prize.

In Ajax's speech Ovid effectively synthesizes, and sharpens, the main arguments stressed by Teucer in his quarrel with the Atreides, in the second part of Sophocles' *Ajax* (Ajax's deeds, and the family bonds of Telamon's sons).

28 This last element links this myth with the common thread of the poem: metamorphoses / transformations. The same flower is also mentioned in association with Ajax's death, by the Greek geographer Pausanias (2nd century AD) in his 'touristic guide' *Description of Greece* (1. 35. 4: see below, 48–9).

29 Also, Ajax briefly recalls Odysseus' bad behavior towards Philoctetes, Palamedes, Nestor.

Odysseus' reply, too, is a masterpiece of rhetoric: a reprise of each and every point of his rival's speech, subtly twisting, distorting, and misrepresenting Ajax's arguments. Odysseus depicts Ajax as a rough, coarse, and brainless soldier who does not deserve the prize (using as an example Ajax's vulgar insults towards him). He systematically opposes his own deeds to those claimed by Ajax, stressing his superiority. Significantly, Odysseus includes among his credits the quarrel with Thersites, the same soldier who blames the Greek generals on the war in Homer's *Iliad* 2. 211–277 (a unique, grotesque, almost 'comical' episode). It is not by chance that this episode appears, as I shall soon show, in a branch of reception which includes mockery, grotesque, and comical satire.³⁰

This character as created by Ovid is enriched in the following centuries by a group of authors whose main representative is the great English playwright William Shakespeare (1564–1616). He knows Ajax's story well, cites him in various occasions, and creates a truly 'tragicomic' Ajax in *Troilus and Cressida* (1600–1602).³¹ Critics remark that Shakespeare's portrayal of Ajax is inspired by the cited dispute in Ovid's poem:

To this dispute Shakespeare refers in several passages. Thus we find the two heroes mentioned together in the description of the Troy picture in Lucrece, the blunt rage of Ajax contrasting with the mild, sly glance of Ulysses; while in *Antony and Cleopatra* 4. 13. 2 and 4. 14. 38, and in *Taming of the Shrew* 3. 1. 53, may be found further proof of Shakespeare's familiarity with the story. (...) Even in *Troilus and Cressida*, where Caxton's *Recuyell* and Chapman's *Homer* furnish the originals for the actions of Ajax in the play, the characterization of the Telamonian hero is that of Ovid rather than that of the authors just mentioned.³²

But in *Troilus and Cressida* Shakespeare goes further, well beyond his sources: he radically changes the cast of Greeks and Trojans, with old and new characters, by mixing their names and relationships; he subverts all the traditional roles, invents parallel plots, and creates sequences of separate scenes, which

30 A curious case of satirical use of the material is John Harington's *New Discourse of a Stale Subject, called the Metamorphosis of Ajax* (1596), "in which he gives his invention of a flush toilet the name of Ajax. The author uses Ajax's 'heroic' deed, the slaughter of a herd of sheep, as a symbol in his polemic against English society": Grafton/Most/Settis (eds.) (2010) 19.

31 The other sources of *Troilus and Cressida* are Chaucer's poem *Troilus and Criseyde* (1385–87), William Caxton's *Recuyell of the Histories of Troy* (1475) and Chapman's *Homer* (1598). See Dixon (2016).

32 Root (1902) 452. He also comments on *King Lear* 2, 2, 33 ("Ajax is their fool") and other plays.

ideally should take place in different places at the same time (a new technique which anticipates cinema). Particularly in the case of Ajax, he sharpens the contrast between the bright, public image of the hero and his private nature: in his true, nude essence, Ajax is comparable to a 'fool', a simple-minded, stubborn, dull soldier, mocked by his own mates. Such a 'satirical' treatment has been effectively summarized by critics as follows:

Of all the heroes of the Trojan War, Ajax became the most ridiculed at the time of late Renaissance. Singularly cruel treatment was accorded to him in Elisabethan England. In *Troilus and Cressida*, Ajax is just "a valiant ass", "churlish as the bear, slow as an elephant", and "a chicken-brained heap of flesh", "all beef and no brains", "all eyes and no sight". A popular pun equated the stupid athlete with a privy: A-jax became a-jakes. Even Shakespeare did not spare himself this vulgar joke: "Your lion, that holds his pollaxe sitting on a close-stool, will be given to Ajax" (*Love's Labour's Lost*, V, ii, 570).³³

In *Troilus and Cressida*, Ajax's first appearance (Act 2, scene 1) is significantly anticipated by a mocking description of him, delivered to Cressida by her servant, Alexander (act 1, scene 1). Apparently it is a parody on the Trojan side, a satirical imitation of the heroic model, in striking contrast with the Homeric portrait. Yet I find here deep echoes of both epic poems—of the comparison, for instance, with a lion and a donkey, cited above—and of the most radical, ambiguous aspects of Ajax created by Sophocles, further developed by Ovid and others.³⁴ First of all, quite surprisingly Ajax is presented as a cousin of Hector (another sign of the changes operated by Shakespeare on the Trojan myth):

[Alexander]: "The noise goes, this: there is among the Greeks / A Lord of Trojan blood, nephew to Hector: / They call him Ajax.

[Cressida]: Good: and what of him?

[Alexander]: They say he is a very man *per se*, / And stands alone.

[Cressida]: So do all men, unless they are drunk, sick, or have no legs.

[Alexander]: This man, lady, hath robbed many beasts of their particular additions. He is as valiant as the lion, churlish as the bear, slow as the elephant: a man into whom nature hath so crowded humours that his valour is crushed into folly, his folly sauced with discretion. There is no

33 Kott (1987) 291 n. 51. See also Tatlock (1915).

34 On Sophocles' innovations, see the first two paragraphs above, 31–6. On further reception see above, 36–8, and below, 41.

man hath a virtue that he hath not a glimpse of, nor any man an attainment but he carries some stain of it. He is melancholy without cause and merry against the hair. He hath the joints of everything, but everything so out of joint that he is a gouty Briareus, many hands and no use, or purblind Argus, all eyes and no sight."

(Act 1, scene 1, 12–30).

Later on, because of his vanity and naivete, Ajax becomes a victim of the sneaky plans of Odysseus and Nestor: he will fight Hector, and thus he will serve as their tool against Achilles' arrogance:

[Nestor]: "(...) Ajax is grown self-willed and bears his head / in such a rein, in full as proud a place / As broad Achilles (...)"

[Ulysses]: "(...) by device let blockish Ajax draw / The sort to fight with Hector (...) / If the dull, brainless Ajax come safe off, / We'll dress him up in voices. If he fail, / Yet go we under our opinion still / That we have better men. But, hit or miss, / Our project's life this shape of sense assumes: / Ajax employed plucks down Achilles' plumes."

(Act 1, scene 3, 188–386)

In the following scene (Act 2, scene 1) Ajax finally appears, and soon beats Thersites. They repeatedly insult each other, in a comic *crescendo*. I report here just the top lines:

Thersites: "Ay, do, do! Thou sodden-witted lord, thou hast no more brain than I have in mine elbows. (...) Thou scurby-valiant ass! Thou art here but to trash Trojans; and thou art bought and sold among those of any wit, like a barbarian slave. (...) thou thing of no bowels, thou!"

(Act 2, scene 1, 45–52).

Later on, Ajax is defined as a fool who "knows not himself" (Act 2, scene 1, 69), and "The unknown Ajax (...) A very horse that has he knows not what!" (Act 3, scene 3, 125–6). Even his ultimate deed, the sword fight with Hector, turns into a farce: in less than ten verses (Act 4, scene 5, 113–9), the duel takes place and is soon interrupted by Hector, who emphatically refuses to fight with his cousin and shed Trojan blood. The two embrace, and Ajax invites Hector in his tent: they will eat together and meet the other Greek generals (Act 4, scene 5, 120–58).

The play as a whole, and this scene particularly, reveals how Shakespeare plays with ancient myths by de-heroizing and lowering them. He also combines

heterogeneous elements and characters, from ancient and contemporary genres—epic poetry, tragedy, romance—and radically innovates them, creating a new form of “comical satire” which anticipates epic parody.³⁵ Not by chance, this tragedy (and particularly its metatheatrical prologue and interludes directed to the audience) lead to an effect of ‘alienation’, or ‘estrangement’, which will later be theorized by the German playwright Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956).

In my opinion, a perfect example of such ‘theatrical revolution’ is precisely the destiny of Ajax: a double-sided hero in Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; a much darker character, humiliated by madness, in Sophocles’ tragedy; and later depicted by Ovid as a big, rude soldier. In Shakespeare he becomes a symbol of human vanity and foolishness, but also of the meaningless inconsistency of life: “Thersites’ body is as good as Ajax’s, when neither are alive” (*Cymbeline*, 4, 2, 252). These last concepts may be related to Attic tragedy (and particularly to Sophocles). But Shakespeare’s comical satire ultimately collides with what I called above the ‘bright’ side of reception. The two branches of tradition—with their heroic / anti-heroic image of Ajax—coexist for centuries: at first Homer, Ovid, and their epigones, influence more poems, tragedies, and chronicles, while translations and adaptations of Sophocles’ play gradually increase.³⁶

Among the authors inspired by Sophocles, the Italian poet Ugo Foscolo (1778–1827), born on the Greek island of Zante /Zakynthos, and fond of classical theater, deserves a special mention: Ajax’s tomb and the judgment of the arms are central in his most famous poem, *Dei Sepolcri* (“On sepulchres”, 1807), section 4, 215–25.³⁷ In 1810–1811, he also wrote a tragedy in five acts named *Aiace* (“Ajax”), premièred at La Scala Theater, Milan (on December, 9, 1811),

35 On comical satire see Campbell (1938). On the same side of reception, the mocking and anti-heroic one, a special mention goes to the satirical, mock—heroic narrative poem *Hudibras* by the British poet Samuel Butler (1613–1680), where Ajax is cited (1.2.310, 337). Among his sources is the well-known novel *Don Quixote* (1605–1615) by the Spanish writer Miguel De Cervantes (1547–1616), who also makes a short reference to Ajax (*Don Quixote* 1, 18).

36 Since the 16th and 17th century, Sophocles’ *Ajax* has been translated and adapted more and more, in dramas, epic poems, novels and other forms of entertainment: for a list of main occurrences, with bibliography, see Reid (1993) 78–80.

37 The text is online at http://www.classicitaliani.it/foscolo/poesia/foscolo_sepolcri.htm (accessed: 05–02–2016). See Rodighiero (2010) 52–4, about the classical sources of Foscolo’s poem (such as the description of Ajax’s tomb, in Pausania’s *Description of Greece*—see above, 37—, and in Greek epigrams).

and first published in Naples, by Urbano Lampredi, in 1828.³⁸ The tragedy was not a success, and is not among Foscolo's masterpieces, but it is interesting for its hints of satire and political allusions: Napoleon was recognizable in the character of Agamemnon, J. Victor Marie Moreau in Ajax, and Joseph Fouché (Napoleon's general) in Odysseus. I argue that the political satire was effective and struck its targets: after a few performances the tragedy was censored and any further staging was forcibly prevented by the local police. Foscolo, for his political ideas, left Italy, spent his last years abroad, and died in exile.³⁹

In more recent times, a similar destiny was shared by another poet who was also condemned to prison and to exile for his political ideas (he was a left-wing activist, and a member of the Greek Resistance), and thus identified himself with Ajax: Yiannis Ritsos (1909–1990). In a celebrated book, entitled *The Fourth Dimension* (composed between 1956 and 1975), one of the seventeen poems is *Ajax*.⁴⁰ It was written in prison and in exile (August 1967–January 1969). In the night after the military coup on 21 April 1967, Ritsos was arrested, first imprisoned in Leros, and later exiled in his house at Samos. In Ajax's fate he saw his own: he too felt betrayed by his own country, isolated, and humiliated. In his monologue, Ajax speaks to a silent, frightened woman (Tecmessa) who seems to hide a child behind her. They are together in a room among broken glasses and corpses of animals. Ajax is hiding from the world and keeps asking her to close the door. He remembers his fine days in Salamis. In the end, he asks her to open the door and have the room cleaned. He tells her he wants to go out, to wash himself. He wishes "to meet a man to talk with" (Ritsos himself). He exits. Servants clean the room, and take the animals away. Soon later, a sailor comes to announce that the master (Ajax) is dead, a sword stuck in his side.

In Italy (where Ritsos has also lived), the poem is well known, translated into Italian,⁴¹ and frequently adapted for the stage: among the most recent

38 The text is online at http://www.classicitaliani.it/foscolo/poesia/foscolo_aiace.htm (accessed: 05–02–2016). For a detailed analysis of Foscolo's tragedy, in its historical context, see Doni (1997) and Pannunzio (2014) 91–113.

39 Foscolo's legacy was reprised, in Italy, by another Italian poet who wrote a poem entitled *Aiace* ("Ajax") in 1933: Vincenzo Cardarelli (1857–1959). For the text and context of the poem, examined in details, see Rodighiero (2010). See also Pannunzio (2014) 113–6.

40 For the English translation, with critical introduction, see Ritsos (1993) 215. In the same years of Ritsos, another great poet, the Russian Iosif Brodsky (1940–1996)—later condemned to exile, too—mentioned Ajax, and Hector's sword, in his poem *Sonet* (1962).

41 For the Italian translation, see Ritsos (2013).

productions one took place on the island of Ortigia (Syracuse), in 2000.⁴² Another adaptation for an actor and an actress (directed by Graziano Piazza, with Graziano Piazza and Viola Graziosi) was staged on 29 July 2015 (Fontanone del Gianicolo, Roma), and in August 2015 at Villa Romana, Patti (Messina), for the *Teatro dei due mari* Festival.⁴³ Another one, as a monologue, was performed at Teatro Due (Parma), in November-December 2014 and on 7th November 2015.⁴⁴

In Italy too, a few years after Ritsos' *Ajax*, another kind of poem was composed in the name of Ajax. It is actually a song, *Aiace* (1972), by a well-known composer and singer, who is also a high school teacher of classics: Roberto Vecchioni (1943–).⁴⁵ His personal version of the story has the formal structure of a rhymed poetry in hendecasyllable verses, and it contains explicit references to the classical sources: the first *stanza* is clearly inspired by Homer's *Iliad* (particularly 17. 645–7, where Ajax invokes Zeus, while fighting), the second by Ovid (the judgment of the arms), the third by Sophocles' *Ajax* (it briefly mentions the slaughter of herd animals, mistaken for men, and the suicide).

Outside Italy, a controversial author dedicated to Ajax “a poem /performance text” (as he defined it), which is still currently performed: *Ajax zum Beispiel* (“Ajax, for instance”). It was written in 1994–1995 by the German poet and playwright Heiner Müller (1929–1995), author of a few celebrated plays inspired by classical texts (such as *Philoctetes*, 1965, and a trilogy on Medea and the Argonauts, 1981).⁴⁶ In those plays, and in this text, Müller freely recasts the myth in an innovative patchwork of ancient and modern texts, all fragmented, and enriched by fine cross-references to ancient Greece, Rome, and German

42 *Aiace* (2000). Produced by INDA, Teatro San Giovannello, Ortigia, Syracuse. Listed online at apgrd.ox.ac.uk among other productions, as a part of *Progetto Ritsos: Letture Sceniche sul Ciclo Mitologico di Yannis Ritsos*.

43 On the last production, see the review <http://www.tempostretto.it/news/teatro-villa-romana-patti-aiace.html>.

44 For both productions, see the theater website: <http://www.teatrodue.org/aiace/>.

45 The song is online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SydGo2lDeWc>; for the lyrics and their classical sources, see <http://ospitiweb.indire.it/~copc0001/lirica/aiace.html>. See also the websites of Vecchioni (www.vecchioni.org), and Renato Pareti (co-author): <http://www.renatopareti.it/anni-70-.html> (accessed 4.6.2016).

46 On the former, see Mandel (1981) 215–50, whose English translation (*Philoctetes*) is also online at <http://authors.library.caltech.edu/25066/1/Philoctetes.pdf>. See also, below, 63. On the latter (*Despoiled Shore, Medea-material, Landscape with Argonauts*) see the English translation by Dennis Redmond, 2002, online at <http://members.efn.org/~dredmond/despoiled.pdf>. (accessed 4.6.2016), and for a brief summary, with bibliography, Lauriola (2015c) 398.

and European culture.⁴⁷ As in his other works, Müller tears Sophocles' plot into pieces, and de-heroizes the original characters. But, first of all, he reflects on his own method and on his role of playwright, by describing himself: he is sitting in his hotel room, in Berlin, and trying to write a tragedy. He calls himself "a dinosaur, but not a Spielberg one": in other words, he is not a successful playwright who writes scripts for Hollywood movies (Odysseus?), but an extinct animal, a figure of a past age, like Ajax. He reads "Sophocles' *Ajax*, for instance", as a description of "an experiment on test animals", "a yellowed tragedy of a man with whom a whimsical goddess plays cruel games, at Troy (...), Arnold Schwarzenegger in *DESERT STORM*". Then he adds, to be clear for modern readers: "I, AJAX, VICTIM OF A DOUBLE DECEIT".

Critics have underlined the facts that inspired the poem, and particularly the above mentioned statement, but also the affinities between the historical context and the myth, and between the poet and the character. Actually the life of Müller was a troubled one: his family suffered the deportation in Nazi Germany, and later the World War 2, the division of Germany, the Communism and the Cold War. The poem contains many references to historical events (the rise and fall of Hitler, the Russian Revolution, the fight between Stalin and other members of the communist party), which he implicitly compares with the story of the Trojan War. After the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), Müller feels, like Ajax, a useless relic: betrayed by his own comrades, defeated by Odysseus, and ultimately victim of Agamemnon and Menelaus' power games. When he wrote the poem, he was running for the direction of the Berliner Ensemble (his rival, Peter Zadek, is quoted in the poem), and he was accused of working indirectly for Stasi.⁴⁸ Against these accusations, in the end, silence seems the one and only "invention". After all other images and words vanished, one last picture remains: "I, AJAX, POURING HIS BLOOD, BOWED ON HIS SWORD, ON TROY'S SHORE.". Müller's poem deserves a special place in this survey: in chronological terms, he anticipates the 'boom' of Ajax's popularity, on stage particularly, in the past twenty years. Secondly, his artwork recalls the patterns of

47 The German text of the whole poem is available online at http://www.henschel-schauspiel.de/media/media/theater/TI-1474_LP.pdf. English translation in Weber (2001) 154–162. A recent performance of the poem, in German, is online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NkkmoszUMY>, with historical premises and interviews at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=douQrWaOz8s> (accessed 7.4.2016). See also McDonald (2003) 88.

48 The brutal methods of the East Germany secret police, their obsessive monitoring of individual lives, and the long-term effects they caused on people are well portrayed in the German movie *The Lives of Others* (2006) written and directed by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck (1973–).

both ancient and modern iconography of Ajax, as it gathers various images from reality, from fine arts, and from movies. Moreover, the work of Müller, his life and career, appear in balance between poetry, history, theater, cinema, and other genres. For all these reasons, Müller's case serves as bridge to the last examples of this section. They pertain to Ajax's reception in two different genres: novel and comics.

The first case is the novel *Sula* (1973) by a Nobel-Prize winning author: Toni Morrison (Lorain, Ohio, 1931–).⁴⁹ Although it is not explicitly related to the ancient drama, there are a few elements, and characters, which recall *Ajax*, including a young man named Ajax (Albert Jacks), and a World War 1 veteran, Shadrack, who institutes a “National Suicide Day”, as he is affected by a post-war trauma called “shellshock”.⁵⁰ As a recent study points out, “The Sophoclean *Ajax* is scattered throughout Morrison's novel: in Shadrack's combat trauma, in his Suicide Day, in the behaviour of Ajax himself (who abandons Sula in a distorted echo of the ancient Ajax abandoning Tecmessa), and in Sula, who functions as the scapegoat for the community, just as Ajax's death may function in Sophocles' play”.⁵¹

The combat trauma suffered by veterans is a key element in the recent reception of *Ajax* on stage, particularly in the United States.⁵² Outside theater, I may just cite here some more examples in a modern and popular genre, which has already established, in his short history, a lively and fertile relationship with classics: comics.⁵³ As is well known, many comics characters are inspired by classical figures, mostly gods and superheroes: there are some figures named

49 About seventy years before *Sula*, a novel entitled *Ajax* (1905) was written by another woman, the German novelist Johanna Niemann (1844–1917), who gives her heroine the nickname of ‘Ajax’ in order to underline her isolation from society. In May 2016, another female writer published a novel freely inspired by Sophocles, and Homer (*Petali rossi. Un nostos per Aiace*), where Ajax, his son Eurysaces, and Tecmessa plan an imaginary journey: see De Carolis (2016).

50 For the post-war traumas in other adaptations see below, 60.

51 Justine Mc Connell (Oxford), “The Sparagmos of Ajax in Toni Morrison's *Sula*”, paper delivered at the 2014 Classical Association Annual Conference (Nottingham, UK). Online abstract at <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/classics/documents/classical-association/ca-abstract-list.pdf>, and complete programme at <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/classics/documents/classical-association/ca-conf-programme.pdf> (accessed.4.4.2016).

52 See below, 62–3.

53 For a general survey on the relationship between classics and comics (in progress), see the two collective volumes edited by Kovacs / Marshall (eds.) (2011) and (2015), each one with a rich introduction, selected examples, and bibliography.

Ajax, but, as usual, it is better to distinguish those elements related to Homer and its tradition from those recalling Sophocles.

In chronological order, the first Ajax in comics is an Italian character, by the great cartoonist Giorgio Rebuffi (1928–2014): “Il fantasma Aiace” (“Ajax the ghost”), who literally “finds no peace” (*che non trova pace*, in rhyme with the character’s name). His first appearance dates 1956, and his stories were originally published by an independent Italian publisher, Renato Bianconi.⁵⁴ Actually, he is a ghost who cannot find peace and rest, as he is continuously disturbed by tricks and noises, which are caused by a multitude of funny creatures, including a bear named Agamemnon (curiously fond of music). Although the comic tones of Rebuffi’s adventures are quite distant from Ajax’s story, obviously, there are some echoes of Homer’s poems, and particularly of the cited episode of *Odyssey* 11. 543–64: in the Underworld, Odysseus meets the ghost of Ajax, Agamemnon and other Greek heroes. Ajax stands alone, showing his anger, frustration, and isolation. This is a nice example of how the anguish of a potentially tragic character (a ghost who finds no rest) may be turned into comics, with cleverness, and humor, in order to acquire a ‘second life’ after death.

Rebuffi was not only a pioneer, in many senses, but also an isolated and independent author: appreciated by many readers, and yet not supported by international companies or publishers. On the contrary, the following characters named Ajax in comics belong to the major ‘families’, or universes, of comics, such as Marvel and DC comics. The former is first represented by a demigod, born in Texas, an ally to the Hulk.⁵⁵ He is connected to the Trojan War, being part of Marvel’s Pantheon, along with characters with ancient names, although of mixed origins, such as Hector or Agamemnon. He is huge and very strong, but quite dumb and emotionally unstable as a young child. Secondly, the codename ‘Ajax’ (the real name being Francis) belongs to a villain of the *Deadpool* comics.⁵⁶ He was created by the authors Joe Kelly and Walter McDaniel. He recently appeared on screen: in the movie *Deadpool*

54 He first appeared in the story “Il fantasma vuole quiete”, on the journal *Trottolino*, n. 4, published by Renato Bianconi (1956). A selection of episodes was recently reprinted by another independent publisher, Luca “Laca” Montagliani: see Rebuffi (2013); for a short survey on Rebuffi’s character, in the context of Italian literary tradition, see Pannunzio (2014) 126–8.

55 First appearance in 1991: see http://marvel.wikia.com/wiki/Incredible_Hulk_Vol_1_379 (accessed 9.5.2016).

56 First appearance in 1998: see http://marvel.wikia.com/wiki/Deadpool_Vol_1_14 (accessed 9.5.2016).

(2016) he is a mercenary, and the only feature that he shares with the original character is his large shield.⁵⁷

Both characters, compared to Rebuffi's ghost, show less humoristic features, more grotesque sides. They are heroes (or rather, anti-heroes) with a 'difficult' personality and overall they seem to be related to Homer's character rather than to Sophocles' tragedy: a giant defender with a huge shield, incredibly strong but too inclined to rage.⁵⁸ A deeper, and further development of the character, more closely modelled on Sophocles' *Ajax*, is Alex Jackson; a character in DC Comics / Vertigo's *Greek Street*, by Peter Milligan (writer) and Davide Gianfelice (author).⁵⁹

The authors created a most impressive series, set in modern Soho (London), freely inspired by Greek tragedies such as *Oedipus* and *Medea*. They dedicated to Ajax a whole, separate trilogy of three issues (from number 12, August 2010, to number 14, October 2010). It is quite different from the rest, as for characters, themes, style, and content. Here the language is colloquial and modern, the drawings, the colours and dialogues are realistic, with just a horror touch in the visions of the main characters: Alex Jackson is a British soldier who returned from Afghanistan with a wounded leg, no job, and a severe combat trauma. In war, he killed an innocent man by mistake, and he is tormented by remorse, visions, and nightmares. Particularly, he is persecuted by the ghost of a dead soldier wearing an archaic Greek helm. Actually his comrade and best friend Pat (Patroclus) died, while Alex was carrying him away from an explosion. But the reader is informed of his death only in the last pages, because for the whole trilogy Alex keeps talking to Pat, as his only confident.

The veteran desperately looks for a job and dreams of a new life with his wife Tessa, who is about to deliver their baby. She tries to help him, and suggests him to see a psychologist. But Alex is too enraged: he feels that the generals and the politician 'betrayed' him, as they did not grant him any reward, nor the medal he deserved. Finally, he kidnaps a minister whom he met in war, and whom he holds responsible for his unjust treatment. He is intentioned to kill him, to punish him for his betrayal, for Pat and for their comrades. When Tessa finds Alex in a room, with the minister, she talks to him, and begs him to

57 See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ajax_\(comics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ajax_(comics)) (accessed 9.5.2016).

58 There is, also, a character named 'Ajak' in the comics series *The Eternals* (1976–) by Jack Kirby, but he is more related to Mayan and Aztek roots, rather than to Greeks. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternals_\(comics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eternals_(comics)) (accessed 3.3.2016).

59 The series was published monthly from September 2009 to December 2010: see Kovacs / Marshall (eds.) (2015) xvii, vertigocomics.com, and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_Street_\(comics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_Street_(comics)) (accessed 4.3.2016).

surrender. For a moment, the reader believes she succeeded. But in the end, Alex runs outside, and let himself be killed by the police.

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

This survey on *Ajax's* reception, so far, has not included the protagonist's birthplace: this is because Salamis has not played an important role, neither in Greek history, or literature, or fine arts. Yet, a great Mycenaean palace and a more recent *temenos* (Ajax's cenotaph?) have been excavated on the island, in the past decade: at first, the international press reported their discovery, and their possible connection to the local hero, as a scoop.⁶⁰ Apart from its walls, however, no trace of Ajax may be seen today in Salamis, which is not a destination for 'cultural tourism'.⁶¹

Ajax, actually, left his island many centuries ago: the Greek historian Pausanias (2nd century AD) in his *Description of Greece* (the oldest 'touristic guide' we are able to read) mentions several statues, and paintings, dedicated to Ajax, in official and religious sites all over Greece, such as the sanctuary of Delphi.⁶² So, though originally a local hero, he transcended his small island,

60 News about the palace (originally a multi-storey structure which probably had more than thirty rooms: see <http://dienekes.blogspot.it/2006/03/palace-of-telamonian-aias-found-in.html>) dated 2006, and, about the *temenos*, 2009. But it is worth noting that in 2009, when I visited the palace, with Mario Negri (Professor of Aegean Studies at Iulm University, Milan) and a group of students, it was still very difficult to find a guide who knew the place and could drive us there.

61 Other birthplaces of ancient and modern celebrities have been more exploited (if not devastated) by mass tourism, which is frequently offered guided tours, souvenirs, miniatures of their hero, or replicas in gigantic sizes (one for all, the fake Trojan Horse at the entrance of Troy's archaeological site). In the case of Salamis, the attractions most frequently cited on touristic websites are the naval battle of the Persian war (480BC) and the name of the playwright Euripides, rather than Ajax. Besides the ancient palace, nothing relevant evokes the local hero, except for a football team (Aias Salamina F. C.). This is not a surprise, if one considers that the name of Ajax is worldwide famous, nowadays, for a football team, based in Amsterdam (NL), and it is shared by many other sporting clubs, all over the world: this, too, is a part of the character's reception (see below, 68–9).

62 Pausanias, in his *Description of Greece*, cites several monuments connected to Ajax and his family, in Attica (1, 5, 2), in Olympia (5 22, 2; 25), in Salamis (1, 35, 3): see <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0160:book=1:chapter=35>. Also, he carefully describes the paintings dedicated to the heroes of the Trojan War by the famous Greek painter Polygnotus (5th century BC) in the building known as Lesche of the Knidians, in Delphi (10, 31, 1). Among other ancient paintings, now lost, we know

with his fame and his cult: from the major city of Athens (where he was chosen as ancestor of a city tribe), they rapidly spread to the rest of Greece, and to Italy (most of all in its southern regions, such as Apulia, in Sicily, in Etruria, i.e., the area of central Italy once inhabited by the Etruscan civilization).

In this huge area, since the late 8th century BC, many artistic representations depict the protagonist of Sophocles' tragedy: bronze statues, marble sculptures, terracotta altars, and most of all objects of everyday use, such as combs, mirrors, handles, gems, scarabs, and particularly painted vases. He was an especially popular subject in two major sites on the opposite sides of the Saronic Gulf: Corinth and Athens. In both areas artists experimented with many facets of the story and different outcomes. Today these works can be found in public and private collections all over the world.

The images of Ajax extend in space and time across centuries throughout the Mediterranean area, and their specific focus differs from one to another: he is often depicted as a warrior fighting or carrying dead bodies of others, or in moments of peace, playing dice with Achilles (an episode which does not occur in the *Iliad* or other sources).⁶³ Those concerning the last part of his life vary: a quarrel with Odysseus; the judgment about Achilles' arms; the moment preceding his suicide; the act of throwing himself on his sword; and indirect allusions to his death and funeral (for instance, Tecmessa covering his body with a veil).

This mass of material has become the object of systematic iconographical and statistical studies which reveal in detail many variations of the Ajax story.⁶⁴ The most complete survey so far combines archaeological data with

of a *Judgment of the arms* by another Greek painter, Parrhasius (4th century BC) cited by the Roman historian Pliny the Elder (1st century AD) in his early encyclopedia *Naturalis Historia*, ("Natural History") 35, 72; he also cites another painting by the Greek painter Timomachus of Byzantium (1st century BC), regarding Ajax meditating suicide (*Naturalis Historia* 35, 26, and 136).

63 On the dice game (an episode probably set at Aulis), see Nagy (2015): "With a throw of the dice, Ajax dooms himself to an eternity of angry frustration over losing a chance to become the best of the Achaeans." Online at http://classical-inquiries.chs.harvard.edu/a-roll-of-the-dice-for-ajax/#_ftn3 (accessed 2,2,2016).

64 In the past, several critics have carefully examined all the possible sources, from epic poems, to tragedies (including those by Aeschylus, now lost, regarding Achilles, Ajax, and the judgement of the arms), and compared them with the most representative artworks of painted pottery, such as the Eurytos crater (c.600BC: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/artifact?name=Louvre+E+635&object=vase>), the Getty tondo (490BC: see <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/12078/attributed-to-brygos-painter-attic-red-figured-kylix-greek-attic-about-490-bc/>), or other works by Exekias (6th century BC), by Douris and Brygos painter (5th century BC). See Williams (1980).

mathematics and statistics, examining a sample of 194 pieces (vases, statues, mirrors, combs, and other objects) from Attica, Corinth, southern Italy, Sicily, Etruria, showing a great diversity of representations but with discernible features in different periods, places, and techniques.⁶⁵ Ajax is represented both alone and with others, and who the characters are (except for the objects which name them) is often uncertain. Moreover, audience expectations always vary, and the political and local meanings of the myth change accordingly. Hence some themes or episodes, such as duels, or the embassy to Achilles, are more frequently treated in certain periods and locations, or on certain types of objects, such as black-figure vs. red-figure vases, or Corinthian vs. Athenian ones. The image of Ajax carrying the dead Achilles, for example, is attested between the second half of the 6th century and the first half of the 5th century BC. The iconographic tradition of Ajax's suicide has been thoroughly discussed at a recent conference, whose papers offer a most accurate survey, and a large bibliography.⁶⁶

As these papers agree, the iconographic questions regarding Ajax are complicated by the wide area over which the objects are distributed, and by the long chronological period, including archaic and classical ages, Hellenistic, Etruscan and Roman art. Various depictions of his death are attested starting with the second half of the 8th century BC; those in the visual arts and those in the literary sources are quite different. For example, "The iconographic tradition of the suicide of Ajax provides the perfect case for showcasing the problematic relationship between pots, and plays (or, more generally, between images and poetic narrations) in quite extreme terms. It also most clearly reveals how difficult it is not to be attracted (implicitly or explicitly) by the general model that assumes the dependence of figurative narration on the poetic ones as the norm".⁶⁷ These studies show how the suicide and other details of

65 For a report on the main subjects and episodes treated, with illustrations, and a synoptic table of the items in chronological order, see Camiz/Ferrazza (2006).

66 Among the papers delivered at the conference at Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa (2013), see particularly the paper by Maria Luisa Catoni, now in Most / Ozbek (eds) (2015) 15–30, for a survey and bibliography on the most relevant questions and examples, regarding Ajax in ancient iconography. The whole conference is also available on youtube and Catoni's paper (from 2:06 hours on) is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8u2Cp1RqaHg&authuser=0> accessed 4.4.2016).

67 This is the premise of Catoni's paper in Most/Ozbek (eds) (2015) 15. She summarizes, with a rich bibliography, how critics have treated such a complex questions. She also analyzes a few selected pieces, in a wider context, in order to show how the theme of suicide is variously depicted and connected to other moments of Ajax's story. It is worth noting that nowadays, as a general rule, prudence prevails in supposing any connection between fine

Ajax's story were popular before, and continue to be popular during the period of 5th century Attic drama.⁶⁸ They may also contribute to the identification of Ajax in figures or statues which do not bear his name. One of the major examples comes from the main temple of Aegina, an island close to Salamis, in the Saronic gulf (17 nautical miles from Athens' port, Piraeus). Since ancient times, the two islands were linked by common mythical ancestors: Peleus (king of the Myrmidons, father of Achilles) and Telamon (king of Salamis, father of Ajax and Teucer) were both sons of Aeacus, king of Aegina and son of Zeus and Aegina.⁶⁹

In North-eastern Aegina, an early 5th century Doric temple—still well preserved—was dedicated to Aphaia (probably a local version of Athena). Originally its two pediments were splendidly decorated with life-size sculptures (500–480 BC approximately).⁷⁰ In 1811, the extant statues were bought by the Bavarian King Ludwig I, and they are now displayed, in a reconstruction of their (supposed) original location, at the Glyptothek Museum in Munich (Germany). The west pediment is dominated by the central figure of Athena, with an enigmatic smile; near her, on both sides, two warriors fight in opposite direction, each carrying a shield: one of them was allegedly decorated with an eagle. This detail, which accords with the literary and iconographic sources

arts and literary sources. Artists who work with different medias do share the same visual culture, if not the same audience and targets. But they freely use and recast elements, depending on their media, age, context of production, personal goals and interpretations.

68 Later on, Ajax easily becomes a symbol of universal feelings of loss and death, as proven by many funeral objects concerning his suicide. In Etruria, for instance, Ajax is freely associated with Hades, and with other myths and figures not related to Homer's *Iliad*, or other literary sources. On Etruscan vases, see Beazley (1947).

69 About the mythical families located in Salamis and Aegina, and the related cults, see Jebb (1907) xviii.

70 Since 1811, the statues and fragments of both pediments have been reconstructed in different ways by various scholars, from Thorwaldsen to Dieter Ohly, whose hypothesis is followed by most sources available online: see <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/artifact?name=Aegina%20East%20Pediment%202&object=sculpture> <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/artifact?name=Aegina+West+Pediment+2&object=sculpture> (with a brief survey on the figures and the clues for their identification). About the temple, and the sculptures, see Bankel (1993); for a brief survey on the history of Aegina and on the temple, with an English abstract and up-to-date bibliography, see Santi (2001). See also http://www.aeginagreece.com/aegina/pages/articles/culture/aphaia_temple_aegina.html. The pediments and the sculpture are carefully filmed, with an English comment, at <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ancient-art-civilizations/greek-art/early-classical/v/east-and-west-pediments-from-the-temple-of-aphaia-aegina-c-490-480-b-c-e>,

cited above, suggests that the warrior might be Ajax.⁷¹ If the reconstruction of the pediment is acceptable, Ajax may be literally turning away from Athena, as he faces the enemies in the opposite direction. Their two figures, although near, appear distant, as to ignore each other. In my opinion, this powerful image of a lonely warrior fighting all by himself—partially covered by and symbolically identified with his shield—is perfectly coherent with the portrait that the cited texts have traced so far.

Comparing iconographic and literary sources may be relevant in other cases, such as a renowned marble statue which has been identified by some critics with Ajax on the verge of suicide: the so-called “Belvedere Torso”. Only the central part of the body remains, while the head, and most of the arms and legs are lost. It is signed by the Athenian artist Apollonios (1st century BC), who probably took inspiration from an original bronze sculpture of the first half of the 2nd century BC. This masterpiece, known in Rome since the 15th century, was acquired by the Vatican Museums between 1530 and 1536 and was admired by the artists of the Renaissance.⁷² In the decade after 1530, possibly as a result of this sculpture acquisition, Ajax became a popular subject for Italian artists. Despite his unlucky fate, he was among the Trojan heroes chosen by rich private citizens, but also members of local governments, who commissioned ceramic pieces, objects and frescoes, in order to decorate their villas and palaces.⁷³ The most famous case is the splendid Palazzo Ducale (Mantua) where the great Italian architect and painter Giulio Romano (1499–1546) and his assistants depicted Ajax in 1538–1539 among other figures of the Trojan War, defending the corpse of Patroclus.⁷⁴ A few years later, in 1555 the Italian architect and painter Giovan Battista Castello (1526–1569) depicted the judgment of the arms, and Ajax’s suicide (after Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*) in frescoes now located in the Palazzo della Prefettura, Bergamo (formerly in Villa Lanzi di Gorlago).⁷⁵ Another renowned Italian artist, the neo-classical sculptor Antonio Canova (1757–1822), was inspired by the duel between Hector and Ajax, as told

71 Ajax’s father Telamon, too, was probably depicted, while fighting, on the other pediment, in the same position of special prominence, next to Athena: see <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/artifact?name=Aegina%20East%20Pediment%202&object=sculpture>.

72 See the museum website http://www.museivaticani.va/2_IT/pages/x-Schede/MPCs/MPCs_Salao6_01.html (accessed 4.4.2016). For an accurate analysis of the statue, the identification with Ajax, and its iconographic tradition, see Wünsche (1998).

73 About these frescoes (regarding Odysseus, in particular), and their literary sources, see Lorandi (1996).

74 Reid (1993) 79 cites also another figure, stroke to death by a thunder, on a rock, in a sea-storm: but comparing the ancient sources, cited above (Homer, *Odyssey* 4. 499–511) it is more likely that he is Ajax, son of Oileus, rather than the son of Telamon.

75 About this fresco, and other examples, see Lorandi (1996) 267–78.

in Homer's *Iliad*, 7. 206–312. He carved two marble statues, named *Hector* and *Ajax*, now in Venice (Palazzo Treves de' Bonfili) symmetrically standing in classical attitudes.⁷⁶

Music

In the history of music and opera, Sophocles' *Ajax* does not play an important role. He makes just a short appearance at the end of 17th century, in France and in Italy, when opera was quite a popular genre. I list here just the essential references I found about them.⁷⁷ Ajax's story is told in the act 5 of *Achille et Polyxène* ("Achilles and Polyxena"), a French opera (*tragédie en musique*) based on Virgil's *Aeneid*, with a libretto by Jean-Galbert De Campistron (1656–1723). The opera's *ouverture* ("musical introduction") and first act were composed by the Italian-born French composer Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687), who died before he completed the score. The prologue and the remaining acts (2–5) were composed by Lully's pupil, Pascal Collasse (1649–1709). The opera was first performed, eight months after Lully's death, on November 7, 1687, at the Théâtre du Palais Royal in Paris, by the Paris Opera (Académie Royale de Musique).⁷⁸

Few other operas, all named "Ajax", were composed and performed in Italy in the following decade: *L' Ajace*, first performed in 1694 at Teatro Ducale, Milan, with a libretto by Pietro D'Averara, music by Francesco Ballarotti (c.1660–1712), Carlo Ambrogio Lonzati (c.1645–1710/15), and Paolo Magni (c.1850–1737); *L' Ajace, opera seria* first performed in Rome, 1697, with music by Francesco Gasparini (1668–1727); on the same libretto by D'Averara, another opera named *L' Aiace* was first performed in Rome, 1697, at Teatro Capranica, an adaptation by Bernardo Sabadini (?–1718) of the original scores by Ballarotti, Lonzati, Magni (1694); another *Aiace* was composed on the same 1697 libretto by the more famous Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725). Microfilmed copies of the main "Arie" ("songs"), and excerpts from the musical scores by Gasparini and

76 The latter dated 1811–12: significantly, when the tragedy *Aiace* ("Ajax") by Foscolo was performed: see above, 41–2. See the photo and the archive catalogue: online http://catalogo.fondazionezeri.unibo.it/scheda.jsp?decorator=&apply=&tipo_scheda=OA&id=83772&titolo=Archivio+Fotografico+della+Soprintendenza+Speciale+per+i+beni+storici%2C+artistici+ed+etnoantropologico+per+il+Polo+Museale+della+citt%C3%A0+di+Venezia+e+dei+Comuni+della+Gronda+Lagunare+%2C+Palazzo+Treves+de%26%23039%3B+Bonfili++Statua+di+Ettore (Accessed 3.3.2016).

77 For a short list of operas and musical scores inspired by *Ajax*, in chronological order, see Reid (1993) 79 and Foley (2012) 260–1.

78 About the opera, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achille_et_Polyx%C3%A8ne (accessed 9.9.2016).

by Scarlatti are available in selected libraries, such as the “Conservatorio San Pietro a Majella” (Naples), and in some universities.⁷⁹

One more French opera, *Ajax*, by François Francoeur (1698–1787), with libretto by Louis Poinset de Sivry (1733–1804), was first performed in Paris (1762).⁸⁰ In recent times, a chamber opera was inspired by a “cold case” of many years ago (1949), which somehow evoked the ghost of Ajax: the death of James Forrestal (1892–1949, Secretary of Navy in World War 2, and first United States Defense secretary), was related to Sophocles’ tragedy by newspapers, and recently by a two-act opera, *The Last Days of James Forrestal* (libretto by Gary Heidt, music by Evan Hause, directed by Philippe Bodin, staged in New York, Present Company Theatorium, on May 19, 2002).⁸¹

Dance

To my knowledge, Sophocles’ *Ajax* is not a popular subject for choreographers and dancers. I found only a ballet by the French choreographer Jean-Georges Noverre (1727–1810): *La mort d’Ajax* (“The death of Ajax”), allegedly, was first performed in 1758–60 (?) at the Opéra in the French city of Lyons.⁸² I found no significant evidence, nor images, nor any relevant information about any other ballet inspired by Sophocles’ *Ajax*.

However, it is well known that music and dance play a relevant role in many stage productions of *Ajax*:⁸³ for instance, the 1939 production at the Greek theater of Syracuse included incidental music by the composer Riccardo Zandonai (1883–1944), who also wrote an orchestral suite named *Ajax* (1940), and choral movements developed by the brilliant choreographer Rosalia Chladek (1905–1995).⁸⁴

79 See for instance the copies of the original manuscripts online at http://www.internet.culturale.it/opencms/opencms/it/ricerca_metamag.jsp?semplice.y=0&semplice.x=0&q=aiace&semplice=semplice&instance=mag, and the list of libraries of Naples, Cornell, Buffalo university, and UCLA (<http://www.worldcat.org/title/aiace/oclc/30006948?referer=di&ht=edition>) (accessed 9.9.2016).

80 See <http://dictionnaire-journalistes.gazettes18e.fr/journaliste/647-louis-poinsinet-de-sivry> (accessed 9.9.2016).

81 On the same episode, there is also an unpublished play by Ken Urban, *The Absence of Weather* (2001–2010); see Dorati (2011).

82 See Reid (1993) 79.

83 A few examples are listed in Reid (1993) 79.

84 About the 1939 production, see below, 55–8.

On Stage and Screen

Stage

The examples cited above aim at showing how the complex image of Ajax created by Homer and by Sophocles has been variously transformed, developed, enriched by many different artists in the history of literature and in fine arts. As for Sophocles' *Ajax* in particular, it was not so frequently adapted and performed on stage for centuries.⁸⁵ Until the end of 19th—early 20th century the available information are very scarce, with some exceptions: for instance a French translation after Sophocles (1877) by Charles Marie René Leconte de Lisle (1818–1894)⁸⁶ and the first Greek play ever performed at Saint Andrews Hall, Cambridge (29th November–2nd December 1882).

On the 1882 Cambridge production, the paper “Performance Ajax as the First Cambridge Greek Play: Antiquity or Modernity?” was delivered by Efstathia Athanasopoulou (UCL) at the 2014 classical association annual conference (Nottingham, UK). I quote her abstract “On the one hand, the language of the play, the interpretation of female parts by male students, the statuesque nature of costumes and the archaeological reconstruction of scenery and theatrical space aim at an authentic representation of Sophocles' drama. On the other hand, the diptych nature of the play is conceived as alien to modern ideas about dramatic structure leading to a considerable reduction of lines from the second half of the play in the acting edition of Jebb. Masks are considered intolerable for modern tastes while Mr. Macklin is praised for his role as Tecmessa thus adding to the ancient play a romantic tone anticipated by modern audiences of the period. In conclusion, it is suggested that *Ajax* in 1882 is the instantiation of the belief that ‘a modern representation of an ancient classic must always be more or less a compromise’ (Times, 4th Dec. 1882).”⁸⁷

Fifty years later, another important production revealed the tragic potential of this drama on the verge of World War 2. Precisely, I am referring to the first performance of *Ajax* at the Greek Theater of Syracuse, from 26th April to

85 For a list of early modern productions (respectively dated 1575, 1564, 1605, 1694, 1716), and their bibliography, see the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman drama website (<http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/productions/production/959>. Accessed 2.2.2016). For a list of United States productions (20th–21th century), see Foley (2012) 260–2.

86 On De Lisle, see Delcourt (1925) 218–252, Van Zyl Smit (2016) 246–7, and <http://archive.org/stream/sophocleoolis!goog#page/n8/mode/2up> (accessed 3.6.2016).

87 I found also an amateur production, staged in New York (1904), which had a huge success and was described in a lively review by an enthusiastic critic, Riess (1904), online at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/40405241.pdf> (accessed 4.5.2016).

22nd May, 1939. Only a few days after it finished, on 22 May 1939, the Italian foreign minister Galeazzo Giano (Mussolini's son-in-law) signed with Joachim von Ribbentrop of Germany the "Pact of Steel" ("Patto d'acciaio", "Stahlpakt"), a military and political alliance between the fascist Kingdom of Italy and the Nazi Germany. Officially it confirmed the long-existing friendship between the two countries. But it was actually a prelude to war (which broke out in September 1939).⁸⁸

Therefore, in that specific moment the INDA production acquired a symbolic status, and a political meaning for both countries. The event was massively advertised with artistic posters, leaflets and publications, both in Italian and German language, in order to attract foreign tourists.⁸⁹ The king of Italy, Vittorio Emanuele III, watched the show among other Italian and foreign celebrities, and politicians. Italian and German newspapers highlighted the event, remarked the presence of such an exceptional audience, and praised this all-star production: the scenes were designed by a famous architect, Pietro Aschieri, and the text was translated by a well know philologist, Ettore Bignone, who had already worked for INDA.⁹⁰ Duilio Cambellotti (the author of most of the scenes, costumes and posters of the first INDA productions) created the costume and the poster (figure 1.1).⁹¹

88 In 1924 Benito Mussolini, the leader of the Fascist party, saw *Seven against Thebes*, and *Antigone* at the Syracuse Greek theater. He then supported changing the Committee for Classics into an Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico—INDA ("National Institute of Ancient Drama"); this occurred in 1925. The State financially supported INDA and gave it ideological supremacy among Italian classical theater festivals; its 'official' role included productions, studies and publications, in order to revitalize the legacy of Greece and Rome, as planned by the Fascist regime. About this and the Fascist propaganda on classics, see Treu (2006), (2011) and Van Zyl Smit (2016) 226–7; 233 n. 20.

89 Reviews, leaflets, posters and other material on all productions may be consulted at the Archivio Fondazione INDA, Syracuse. On the 1939 production see also Walton (1987) 322–3, 326. Only two INDA productions of *Ajax* at the Greek theatre of Syracuse (1939 and 1988) are recorded online at <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/productions/production/959> (accessed 2.2.2016). There is no record of the third production of *Ajax* at the same theater, occurred in 2010 (see below, 61), nor of another momentous production of *Ajax*, directed by Michele Stilo at the Greek theater of Tindari (see below, 59).

90 While the Fascist regime excluded Jewish teachers, and students, from schools and universities, the greater part of Italian academics, more or less willingly, adhered to the Fascist propaganda. Only twelve Italian scholars, in the whole nation, refused to do it. See Boatti (2001). Moreover, the classicists were among the most active in Mussolini's cultural strategy, based on the glorious 'Roman roots' of Italy.

91 Duilio Cambellotti, *Ajax* (1939) original poster, INDA Production. Courtesy: Archivio Fondazione INDA Syracuse.



TEATRO GRECO DI SIRACUSA
APRILE - MAGGIO 1937 A-XVII

ΑΙΑΞ **ΕΚΥΒΑ**
DI SOFOCLE DI EVRIDIDE

26-27 APRILE 4-7-11-14 MAGGIO
TRADUZIONE DI ETTORE BIGNONE
MUSICHE E CORI DI RIC. ZANDONAI

27-30 APRILE 3-6-10-13 MAGGIO
TRADUZIONE DI MANLIO FAGGELLA
MUSICHE E CORI DI FRANK MALINERO

DANZE IDEATE E DIRETTE DA ROSALIA CHLADEK - SCENE DI PIETRO ASCHIERI

INTERPRETI
LA COMPAGNIA DEL TEATRO ELISEO DI ROMA CON ANDREINA PAGNANI -
GINO CERVI - RINA MORELLI - CARLO NINCHI - ERNESTO SABBATINI -
PAOLO STOPPA COL CONCORSO DI ANNIBALE NINCHI E GIOVANNA SCOTTO -
DIRETTORI D'ORCHESTRA: SIMONE CYCIA-FEDACCVLLA - MESTRO DEL CORO: ROBERTO PENAGLIO

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FIGURE 1 Aiace di Sofocle. A.F.I. Archivio Fondazione INDA SR.

The production was a huge success. Although Italian and German newspapers were not at all objective, especially about the mass participation and the audience reactions, the international press (collected by INDA Foundation) unanimously praised Bignone's modern translation, the lively choreographies, the impressive scenes, the solemn music, and particularly the interpretation of the entire cast, which actually included many good actors, such as Annibale Ninchi (Ajax), Giovanna Scotto (Athena and Tecmessa), Carlo Ninchi (Odysseus), Ernesto Sabbatini (Agamemnon) and Gino Cervi (Teucer), who later became a star in Italian TV and cinema.⁹² There was, also, an added female chorus of dancers, trained and guided by the innovative choreographer Rosalia Chladek (1905–1995).⁹³

As for the characters, Ajax appeared above all as a hero of the Trojan War; i.e., a symbol of strength, a man of honor, a defender who fights till death, and dies for his ideals. So, on the verge of the military alliance, the Greek soldiers became 'doubles' of the ideal champions (and soon of the actual soldiers) of both countries (Nazi German and Fascist Italy). I would suggest to read the choice of Sophocles' *Ajax* for that year, the whole INDA production, and the international press campaign in this specific historical perspective: altogether, they perfectly fit the cultural strategy of the regime. The military values of both countries were at stake on the verge of the war. Therefore any judgment on that production is inevitably connected to the Fascist regime which produced it: particularly the madness and the slaughter which dominate the first part of the play, and the sadness of the second part, seem a tragic premonition of what actually followed, the tragic history of World War 2 and the massacres perpetrated in Europe, in Africa, in Japan.

After World War 2, when Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia became territories of war, the military politics of various countries and their conflicts altogether played—albeit indirectly—a major role in the reception of ancient dramas, in particular of *Ajax*. First of all, the mainstream trend in adaptations and stage productions of classical tragedies reversed the concepts of 'military heroism', and the perception of the characters described above, with reference to the first 'patriotic' *Ajax* in Syracuse (1939) where the Greek soldiers were clearly

92 See the photos of actors, scenes, and dances, on the website: <http://fondoluce.archivioluca.com/LuceUnesco/fondo-teatro/scheda/foto/IL8900001259/18/Annibale-Ninchi-Aiace-ritratto-in-costume-di-scena.html?persone=Sabbatini,%20Ernesto&luoghi=Siracusa> (accessed 4.4.16).

93 She was a pioneer in modern choreography, and she founded a new dance technique (the Chladek-system): see <http://rosalia-chladek.com/typo/index.php?id=152>. (accessed 4.4.16).

assumed as the champions of military virtues. Since 1945, most classical productions became not only anti-war oriented, but often explicitly 'engaged' towards pacifistic movements.⁹⁴

As the so-called "Cold War" opposed United States and Russia, an Italian production provided a good example, for historical reasons and for its location, which however somehow condemned it to oblivion: the ancient Greek Theater of Tindari (on the North-Eastern coast of Sicily, at about 100 miles from Syracuse) re-opened after centuries on August 25, 1956 with an *Ajax* directed by Michele Stilo. It was a grand opening, but in the following years the festival was soon obscured by the more famous INDA productions, downgraded to a local production, and scarcely known until present days.⁹⁵ Finally, on August 27, 2016, the sixtieth anniversary of that opening was celebrated in the same theater by many artists, including the great Sicilian director, actor, and playwright Vincenzo Pirrotta: I could not watch the show, unfortunately, but our twelve-year friendship allowed me to discuss it together. Pirrotta's art is always contemporary, and strongly 'engaged': he wrote and played his own prologue where the plot of Sophocles' *Ajax* is summarized in the style of oral narration known as *cunto* (in Sicilian dialect), making connections with recent wars. He ended the show by acting a most intense 'suicide monologue' (in Italian). Pirrotta's work on *Ajax*, and on classics, is still in progress: actually, it is not only the most recent *Ajax* I know of, but it should be considered one of the most valuable, at present times, in Italy.

In my opinion, all the examples I selected for this chapter may show how this tragedy too (like other classical dramas such as Euripides' *Trojan Women*) is more and more frequently adapted on the basis of a common attitude, which rejects the war and condemns its horrors.⁹⁶ Accordingly, the whole plot, the characters, and the situation created by the ancient playwright are compared with contemporary events: more specifically, some or all aspects of many recent shows (script, stage directions, scenes and costume design, actors' interpretations and so on) aim at evoking possible parallels between the past

94 For a definition of 'engaged' theater, and a list of interesting examples, see Adamitis/Gamel (2013) 285–6.

95 The 1956 production at Tindari is not listed in the APGRD database (the first record regarding that theater is a 1957 *Iphigenia*) and I found no evidence on the Internet. I had the privilege of knowing it, personally, thanks to the famous Sicilian artist and playwright Emilio Isgrò (1937–), who debuted there as an assistant director, and fell in love with the classics, at the age of 19: see Isgrò (2010) 13. He later wrote a trilogy based on Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (*L'Oresteia di Gibellina*, 1983–1985), and other adaptations of classical dramas (mostly in Sicilian dialect) which I have recently revised for a critical edition: Isgrò (2010).

96 On *Trojan Women*, and its reception, see Lauriola (2015b).

and the present. In the United States this has been especially common when the country is involved in war, and artists and groups used classical drama to support peace.⁹⁷

As an effect of recent wars, more and more frequently, Ajax is given new life on stage ironically by those ‘darker sides’ (including madness, uncontrolled violence, and suicide) which had often been obscured in previous productions, by the ‘bright ones’ (honor, heroism, sacrifice, and so on). Actually, Ajax seems to fit perfectly modern symptoms of a disease first identified in World War 1 (then called “shellshock”, now Post Traumatic Stress Disorder—PTSD).⁹⁸ In this regard, in 2009 I saw a version of *Ajax* (which was part of a “Madness Season” in a London theater), set in a World War 1 military hospital camp (Ajax was affected by shellshock, Athena was a nurse, the chorus wounded soldiers).⁹⁹ In other recent adaptations and staged readings of *Ajax*, the protagonist and his comrades may be represented as victims of his madness, of enraged fury, or of chronic depression; the consequences frequently include domestic violence, self-destruction, and suicide.¹⁰⁰

The first example of the new era is a controversial (and most studied) adaptation of Sophocles’ *Ajax* by the American director Peter Sellars, based on the script by Robert Auletta and produced by the American National Theater (1986/87).¹⁰¹ Ajax was played by a deaf actor (Howie Seago), in order to stress his isolation. He first appeared in a plastic cage, up to his knees in blood; he used sign language and a Chorus member delivered his lines. Chorus members

97 An example of this phenomenon is the staged reading of *Ajax* by the Living Theatre on May 18/19, 1960, during the Vietnam War, and well before their most famous *Antigone* (1967), at the New School for Social Research (NY), although listed among APGRD productions as ‘unknown venue’.

98 “Shellshock” affected the character of a World War 1 veteran, Shadrack, in the novel *Sula*: see above, 45.

99 Sophocles’ *Ajax*, translated by Robert Cannon and directed by Jack Shepherd, performed in July 2009 at Riverside Studio, London: <http://www.thelondonword.com/2009/06/ajax-at-riverside-studios/> (accessed 4.5.2016).

100 Most productions and staged readings usually focus on the feelings of a soldier, or a veteran, his/her mates, and family: the former often feels lonely, angry, frustrated; his family, and friends feel unable to help him, challenged by the whole situation, and afraid of the possible consequences including suicide (a phenomenon which has increased in the United States since the beginning of the Iraq and then the Afghanistan wars).

101 It was performed between 1986 and 1987 in several places, included the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington DC, and La Jolla Playhouse. See Kroll (1986); Hall/Macintosh/Wrigley (eds.) (2004) 391–2; Foley (2012) 146–52; Adamitis/Gamel (2013) 288–9; <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/productions/production/3147> and <https://www.broadwayplaypub.com/the-plays/ajax/> (accessed 12.12.2015).

were in military uniforms and supported Ajax; other characters were reporters, trying to figure out the truth, and others used the official language of politics, trying to cover their real intents and their intrigues against Ajax. Sellar's main targets were United States foreign policies and collusions between political and military hierarchies.

In Italy, meanwhile, other adaptations suggested not only that Ajax's isolation and frustration might be seen as directed against the State and the Army, but also that he may be a victim of powerful crime organizations (commonly called Mafia in Sicily, 'Ndrangheta in Calabria, Camorra in Campania and in other parts of Southern Italy). While Sellars was directing his *Ajax*, in Sicily many chiefs of the local Mafia were judged and condemned in a huge collective trial (ended in December 1987). The year 1988 scored a sad record for the high number of civilian and military victims killed by Mafia. In Palermo, two judges were rivals for the command of the anti-Mafia pool: Antonino Meli and Giovanni Falcone. The latter, at that time, was the favorite for his successful work of many years. He was defeated, against all odds, and he felt isolated, like Ajax, as other judges were nominated and promoted.¹⁰² Then the Italian director Antonio Calenda brought Sophocles' *Ajax* for the second time to Syracuse (1988). I had the chance to watch the young, talented actor Massimo Popolizio at his debut in the Greek theater.¹⁰³ He impressed the whole audience as a powerful Ajax, who fought his battle alone against a corrupt hierarchy, which 'enjoyed' the complicity of the State. No direct reference was made. But everyone in the audience thought of Falcone as an "Ajax of our times".¹⁰⁴

Compared to this, the third and last production of *Ajax* in Syracuse (2010) was by far less interesting: the young director Daniele Salvo, perhaps in order to attract younger audiences, represented the characters in a stereotyped style. The chorus was dressed as an army of bold Greek soldiers, and it moved and acted in the manner of the 'heroic' iconography portrayed in *300* (Frank Miller's comics and Zack Snyder's movie).¹⁰⁵ Their military costumes and boastful attitudes appeared so exaggerated that many spectators smiled, or even laughed at them. In the director's interviews and comments, at that time, it was not clear if it was meant as a parody or not. In any case it was a most striking contrast

102 This accusation was explicitly formulated by his friend and colleague, the judge Paolo Borsellino, in a famous interview (*la Repubblica*, 20th July, 1988).

103 Few years later, Popolizio became a star, in theater, TV, and cinema.

104 On 23rd May, 1992 Falcone was honored in silence before the show, in the Greek theater of Syracuse, a few hours after he was killed by Mafia. A few weeks later, on 19th July 1992, Paolo Borsellino was killed by Mafia too, in Palermo.

105 On that show, and on the chorus in particular, see Treu (2010).

to other contemporary productions of *Ajax* staged in the same years (either nearby, or on distant places). An example is a 2009 production in Calabria¹⁰⁶ in the local dialect: *UTingitu. Un Aiace di Calabria* ("Dead Man Walking. An *Ajax* in Calabria") was inspired by actual conflicts among family clans and their gangs.¹⁰⁷ The second example is a production staged in Palermo in March 2012, a quite unusual version of Sophocles' *Ajax* directed by Patrick Boyle, director and scholar (mainly on Dante) active in both Cambridge and Italy. For many years he has worked on *lecturae scenicae* ("staged readings"), rhythmic readings of classical texts in ancient Greek with projected English subtitles, using innovative acting techniques. In the past decade he created an epic cycle in episodes, based on Homer's *Odyssey* (*Nausicaa* 2005, and other productions), followed by Sophocles' *Oedipus in Colonus* (2010) and *Ajax* (2012).¹⁰⁸

In the same decade, *Ajax* has been among the Greek dramas most frequently staged in Britain and in the United States, due to the military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁰⁹ A particular trend in the reception of this play has to do with therapeutic healing following the footstep of the American psychiatrist Jonathan Shay (1941–). Since 1987, he has been working with United States veterans from Vietnam; in order to describe their actual feelings, he started to use Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in a totally different context.¹¹⁰ This is not the place to discuss how Shay, and his followers, projected on ancient texts

106 The region of Southern Italy opposite to Sicily, affected by local crime organizations ("Ndrangheta").

107 The play, adapted and directed by the Italian playwright and director Dario De Luca, was produced by a local theater group, quite famous in Italy, Scena Verticale: preview on 3rd May 2009, "Primavera dei Teatri" Festival, and première on 16th June 2009, Teatri delle Mura, Padova. See Albanese (2015), and <http://www.scenaverticale.it/it/press/u-tingitu-un-apace-di-calabria/> (accessed 4.4.2016).

108 A first version of Boyle's *Ajax* was staged in Cambridge, UK (Lecture Theatre, Emmanuel College) in February 2012: see the interview with Patrick Boyle, and the survey on his theater, by De Domenico Sica (2010) 203. Another adaptation from *Ajax*, by Manlio Marinelli, was performed in Palermo in March 2015 (*Aiace /Sofocle*, directed by Lia Chiappara, Teatro Libero): see online <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2015/03/22/aiace-sofocle-come-attuale-il-potere-che-mortificaPalermoo8.html> (accessed 2.2.2016).

109 Most adaptations of *Ajax*, for this reason, set the action in modern war zones: for instance *Our Ajax*, a play by Timberlake Wertenbaker, directed by David Mercatali, at Southwark Playhouse, London (November, 2013). See the interview with Mercatali; <http://www.open.ac.uk/arts/research/pvcrs/2014/mercatali> (accessed 2.3.2016).

110 See Shay (1994), (2002). For a clever survey on Shay's theories, and his influence on theater practitioners, in the past decade (not only in the reception of *Ajax* but also of other tragedies, such as Meagher's *Herakles gone mad*, 2006), see Adamitis/Gamel (2013) 286–8.

modern issues. However, it is important to acknowledge the impact of this trend of studies on reception: not only has it directly inspired productions of ancient dramas, including Sophocles' *Ajax*, but it has also influenced other directors, and playwrights. In the United States, particularly, it is worth mentioning Theater of War by Bryan Doerries, and Ancient Greeks / Modern Lives (AG/ML) run by Peter Meineck (Aquila Theatre and New York University).¹¹¹ The former is funded by the United States Pentagon, and specifically dedicated to soldiers, veterans, and their families; the latter is funded by The National Endowment of the Humanities, and other non-military sponsors; it is open to all sort of spectators, and it takes places mostly in theaters and public places, such as libraries.

In the past seven years, Theater of War has produced over three hundred staged readings of *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* followed by discussion, for an audience of 60.000 spectators, throughout the United States, Europe, and Japan.¹¹² In these readings, ancient texts are used as a trigger for discussion and self-analysis in order to encourage especially military (but also civilian) members of the audience to express their feelings about their experiences. Doerries translated other tragedies too, but arguably *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* fit this project best: they focus on an isolated character, betrayed and abandoned by his own comrades-in-arms. Ajax is also a victim of madness, homicidal fury, and suicide. The project aims at preventing similar pathologies in veterans and their families.

The second project, AG / ML by Peter Meineck (a scholar, but also a veteran), was launched in April 2011. This is a nationwide project, involving scholars presenting talks in public libraries in their own locations, along with readings by professional actors and discussions among all participants on any issue that interests them. The texts include Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and Euripides' *Heracles*.¹¹³

This issue is analyzed by Dugdale (below, in this volume) with reference to Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. See also Lauriola (2014a), (2014b).

111 See respectively <http://www.outsidethewirellc.com/projects/theater-of-war/overview> and <http://ancientgreekmodernlives.org/people/program-staff/peter-meineck/> (accessed 4, 4, 2016). On both projects, see Adamitis/Gamel (2013) 295–7; Lauriola (2013), (2014a), (2014b).

112 Doerries' translations of these two tragedies, followed by Sophocles' *Women in Trachis*, and Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, have been recently published with personal introductions and notes: Doerries (2015 b). For a history of the whole project, which has been recently extended to trauma sufferers in general, see Doerries (2015a). See also Cohen/Rogers (2011).

113 See Meineck (2010), and (2012); see also Adamitis Gamel (2013) 296–7.

Besides these projects, I may cite as examples four adaptations of *Ajax* all staged in the United States in one single year, 2011 (when Meineck's project was launched): they have been thoroughly examined in recent papers, and show at best the extraordinary diversity of forms and meanings which have been given to this tragedy today. In February 2011, *The Ajax Project*, devised and directed by Professor Mary-Kay Gamel with Prof. Jana Adamitis, was staged at Christopher Newport University (Virginia). In the show, students were involved in developing their own characters: "the set and costumes evoked modern-day Afghanistan (...) human prisoners of war were substituted for the animals slaughtered by Ajax; the chorus included female soldiers and Odysseus was played by a woman".¹¹⁴ In February-March 2011 another production of Sophocles' *Ajax* (translated by Charles Connaghan and directed by Sarah Benson) was staged at the American Repertory Theater (Cambridge, MA).¹¹⁵ Thirdly, *Ajax in Iraq*, by Ellen McLaughlin (first performed in Cambridge, Mass., 2008) was staged in New York and Minneapolis (summer 2011).¹¹⁶ The fourth production was *Sophocles: Seven Sicknesses*, an adaptation by Sean Graney (who also directed) of all seven of Sophocles' extant plays performed by The Hypocrites at the Chopin Theater, Chicago (September 6–October 23, 2011).¹¹⁷ This last production was particularly clever, successful and outstanding for its unique, excellent mixture of comic / grotesque and tragic/ serious elements, as it was unanimously praised by critics: "an ambitious tragicomedy filled with emotional depth, sophisticated staging, and perfect comedic timing (...) this

114 See Adamitis/Gamel (2013) 297–8, Lauriola (2014) 43–4, and the report by Amy R. Cohen, at the 2016 annual meeting of the Society of Classical Studies, online at <https://classical-studies.org/annual-meeting/147/abstract/raising-stakes-mary-kay-gamel-and-academic-stage> (accessed 4.4.2016).

115 The production, in collaboration with Theater of War, featured the daughter of Colin Powell as Tecmessa, and a chorus of actual soldiers previously filmed and projected on monitors. See the accurate reviews by Clay (2011) and Klein (2011).

116 This adaptation combines the Homeric world with present times, and adds to the ancient characters some modern ones, such as a second chorus, and female soldiers, including the main character of a woman, A. J., who is a sort of 'double' of Ajax: see Adamitis/Gamel (2013) 293–4, and Foley (2012) 262.

117 "Since its founding in 1997 by Sean Graney, The Hypocrites have gained a reputation for boldly tackling absurdist playwrights and throwing a bit of the humorous into straight-laced tragedies": see Danze Lemieux (2011) 133. In 2001, Graney had adapted and directed *Another Ajax* (2001): see Jones (2001), Mauro (2001). In 2012, Graney's script was staged by Ed Sylvanus-Iskander, and performed by The Bats: *The Complete Works of Sophocles (Rebridged): These Seven Sicknesses* (The Flea Theater, New York, NY, January 29–March 4, 2012). See the clever description by Kovacs (2012) 17–23 which also notes the use of comic techniques, from puns to slapstick (*Ajax* at p. 22). See also Foley (2012) 261.

production of Sophocles' seven extant works offers a riveting, fast-paced evening of compelling drama with a dash of Aristophanic humor thrown into the mix" (p. 134), and "It is hard to choose which adaptation is the most successful, but *Ajax* must be among the top three. The act opens with a sensitive yet morbidly humorous montage of madness. Instead of Odysseus and Athena gazing upon the blood-stained and maddened Ajax, as in the original, a flock of sheep enters the stage, bleating its way into Ajax's mind. These aren't just any sheep, but politicians in sheep's clothing. Dressed in blue with a red sash and sheep-headed cloaks, they taunt Ajax, who wields a large butcher's knife. They surround him, fall when they are hit, and then rise up again in a life-sized version of whacka-mole, mocking Ajax with the repeated refrain that the army "nee-ee-ee-eeds" clever politicians like Odysseus, not dull-headed warriors. It is both a hilarious and a haunting representation of madness that brings the audience to pity Ajax as much as Odysseus did in the original prologue".¹¹⁸

Ajax's madness is the core of other modern adaptations that exploit the hints of grotesque and black humor.¹¹⁹ I personally consider as being most impressive the Greek adaptation written and directed by a leading director: Theodoros Terzopoulos, founder of Attis Theater (Athens).¹²⁰ His *Ajax the Madness* (2004) opens with a powerful sound effect—which shifts from laughter to cry, and backwards—, it constantly intertwines the grotesque and tragicomic aspects of Ajax's story, and it uses the bodies of actors (rather than words) in order to stress the character's ambiguous personality.

The director was interviewed at the Fringe Arts in Philadelphia (2013) about his production: "The performance focuses at that incident of the tragedy when Ajax, in a state of divine madness, slaughters the flocks (...) The narration of that incident concentrates the issue of rage, of "mania," which is a kernel and fundamental issue in Ancient Greek tragedy. (...) Madness is the core of *Ajax*, like *bacchaeia* (the trance) is the core of *Bacchae* and lament is the core of *Perses*. I am mainly interested in the kernel condition, the state, than in the *personae* of each tragedy. The first actor performs the monologue bearing the pathos and the 'mania' through the rules of tragedy. The second actor

¹¹⁸ Danze Lemieux (2011) 134–7.

¹¹⁹ Other productions are listed on the APGRD website: see for instance *Ajax: 100% Fun* (45 Bleecker, New York, 22nd February–5th March 2006): <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/productions/production/9585> (accessed 4.4.2016). See also Foley (2012) 261.

¹²⁰ For his biography, and list of productions, see <http://www.attistheatre.com/en/%CE%99%CE%A3%CE%A4%CE%9F%CE%A1%CE%99%CE%9A%CE%9F/terzopoulos.html> (accessed 4.4.2016). See also Van Zyl Smit (2016) 215.

interprets rage through the elements of a satiric drama. And the third one interprets it through the norms of comedy".¹²¹

Screen

Unfortunately, I have found so far no actual evidence of any movie directly inspired by Sophocles' *Ajax*. Yet the character has sometimes appeared on screen, mostly in movies largely based on the *Iliad*. Among the latest, the most reviewed and analyzed by critics is *Troy* directed by Wolfgang Petersen (2004).¹²² The movie as a whole is not relevant to our matter as it is not strictly related to Sophocles, but some key elements regarding Ajax are interesting, especially in comparison with other portrayals on stage and in other media discussed earlier. It is important to note that this film was influenced by the same conflict (in Iraq and Afghanistan) which has inspired new adaptations and productions of *Ajax* worldwide in recent years.

Among the most discussed choices made by the *Troy* script at least three concern Ajax, though indirectly. In this film Achilles' cousin is not Ajax but Patroclus, and the latter's new status, (and the silence on his erotic relation with Achilles), notoriously caused a great debate. Here Patroclus takes the role of Ajax, as a cousin and "double" of Achilles, and Ajax is clearly separated from Achilles (as a rough counterpart of the noble warrior?). Significantly, this choice contrasts with the iconographic tradition where, as seen above, the two figures often intertwine: in *Troy* the two men do not even know each other, as Achilles remarks in his first appearance. First, they are competitors in heading to Troy with their ships. Later on, they meet just once, on the shore: in a very short but interesting dialogue, they introduce themselves and each acknowledges the other's value. Later Ajax appears in a few scenes as a giant (taller than any other soldier), rude, brutal soldier with a huge, unique shield. Secondly, on Ajax's death: in this film he does not commit suicide (with his enemy's sword), but he is actually killed in a duel by Hector himself, well before Achilles' death. So an important connection between Ajax and Achilles (the former carrying the latter's corpse), well established in the poetic and iconographic tradition, is

121 Online at <http://fringearts.com/tag/ajax-the-madness/> (accessed 4.4.2016). See also Sidiropoulou (2011) 172–3.

122 For a close, articulate analysis of the movie and its main characters, including filmography and bibliography on the history of Trojan War on screen, see the extensive works by Winkler (ed.) (2007) and (ed.) (2015), respectively reviewed by Gamel (Bryn Mawr 2007.08.09, <http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2007/2007-08-09.html>), and by Blondell (<http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2016/2016-04-44.html>), (accessed 5.5.2016) See also Rodighiero (2016), particularly 344–7.

eliminated. The dispute about the “second best” of the Greek warriors, and the judgment of Achilles’ arms, are abandoned. To be sure, in this film other characters die much sooner than they do in ancient texts (such as Agamemnon and Menelaus, who are, curiously, Ajax’s opponents in Sophocles’ tragedy). These are clearly innovative elements, introduced by the script, but not so distant from ancient sources and practices: in my opinion, *Troy* screenwriter David Benioff seems to be adapting Greek myths and tales creatively, just as other playwrights such as Sophocles, or Shakespeare do. Just as Attic tragedy made changes to ancient models (not only Homer’s *Iliad*, and *Odyssey*, but also the lost poems of the epic cycle), modern writers do the same: they use tragedy as a “sequel” of epic poetry, in order to create new stories. Therefore, the movie includes the fall of Troy, which is not depicted in the *Iliad* (but frequently evoked in other texts, including Attic tragedies); it also “anticipates” the destiny of Greek and Trojan characters who fought there (or escaped, such as Aeneas), and in particular it kills off main characters such as Ajax, Agamemnon and Menelaus, who survive in the *Iliad*. Hence, their death is somehow “projected forward” beyond the proper chronological limits of the original poem, by using as a source the tragedies which concerned them. In this regard, Sophocles’ *Ajax* may lurk in the background, behind the shoulders of the Homeric hero.

Thirdly, Ajax is indirectly related to another remarkable element of this movie: the absence of Olympic gods, who never appear in *Troy*. The script explicitly excludes any divine or supernatural element. The focus is only on human nature: men cannot rely on gods’ help, they fight and die alone, and no transcendent presence could comfort them. In my opinion, no case could fit this choice better than Ajax, the warrior who rejects gods’ help, and was depicted by Sophocles as the first “modern hero” (as critics highlighted): all human, too human.¹²³

One more movie, besides those inspired by Homer, must be cited at least for the presence of a character named Ajax: *The Warriors*, by Walter Hill (1979). It was actually based on a novel with the same name by Sol Yurick (1965) freely inspired, in turn, by Xenophon’s *Anabasis*. Here, the original story (the adventurous travel across Persia of an army of 10.000 Greek mercenaries, after the death of Cyrus, towards the Black Sea), becomes an “Odyssey” set in modern New York: nine members of the Warriors gang travel from Coney Island to the Bronx, and then they have to fight their way back home across enemy lines (other gangs, and policemen), as they are falsely accused of killing Cyrus, the

123 See above, 31.

leader of a bigger gang.¹²⁴ It is worth noting that the movie was an unexpected success, especially among actual gang members. Therefore, it unfortunately provoked acts of violence and vandalism, which required a strong campaign and severe repression by the police. In time, it became a cult-movie, and it is still surprisingly famous, after many decades: fan clubs write blogs on dedicated websites, they regularly meet and organize conventions (some also dress as their heroes!). Younger fans are growing too, unexpectedly, thanks to a popular videogame (*The Warriors*, 2005).¹²⁵

In this movie Ajax (played by James Remar) is a member of a gang: he is strong, stubborn, dominated by his instincts.¹²⁶ These are among the common features that shape the image of Ajax in popular culture, from movies to comics. Particularly his 'dark side', I may argue, influenced other characters in films not directly related to the ancient sources. Among them, Anakin Skywalker / Darth Vader (in the *Star Wars* saga) may be compared to Ajax. The similarities in the key elements of their behavior are—obvious—arrogance, frustrated ambition, fury at unjust treatment and betrayal, rage at former comrades-in-arms, and metamorphosis from defender to offender (i.e., from Jedi to Sith). In both cases wife and friends intervene in vain, but Anakin's attack is more successful in that only a few Jedi survive.

This last example may appear extreme and distant from the ancient models. Yet, it may serve as a bridge towards future surveys, while I close mine with a question: how far can the area of reception be extended, regarding Ajax? Should I search only for his name, going beyond the reception of the Sophoclean tragedy, of the original character and its 'doubles', in literature, theater and any other media? In this perspective, the limits of my research expand virtually everywhere: if I type 'Ajax' on the internet, a surprising variety of occurrences emerges. Many of them appear, at first, scarcely related to Sophocles' *Ajax*. And yet, I find implicit, hidden and fascinating connections: for instance, in 1758 a butterfly was named "Papilio Ajax" by the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778), but the name was later rejected. This fact, too, recalls the destiny of the original character, even if there is no direct connection.¹²⁷

124 For credits, photos, and related articles see <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0080120/>. For a detailed synopsis, see <http://warriorsmovie.co.uk/the-story> (accessed 9.9.2016).

125 See <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0486048/> (accessed 9.9.2016).

126 For a profile of the main characters and actors (especially for James Remar's career in TV series and movies) see <http://warriorsmovie.co.uk/cast> and http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0080120/fullcredits?ref_=tt_ov_st_sm (accessed 9.9.2016).

127 See the story, and images, on https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papilio_ajax (accessed 4.4.2016).

In popular culture, Ajax has never died. He keeps living in a huge number of evidences, forms, and figures, variously connected with the concepts of strength, defense, honor: football and sport teams, vehicles of proved resistance (automobiles, ships, locomotives), defense tools (an anti-aircraft missile), and even a computer programming technique (the acronym AJAX: "Asynchronous Java Script And Xml"); among others, the brand of cleaning products named "Ajax" (created in 1947 and still on sale worldwide), whose most successful slogan was: "stronger than dirt".¹²⁸

In this last case, the idea of strength is also associated with other aspects, equally resonant with Sophocles' tragedy: the cleaning of stains, dirt, and blood; ultimately, the purification of a warrior, after a slaughter, either of animals, or men. So, implicitly, I find remote traces of Sophocles' *Ajax* (although he is never cited), in the award-winning performance *Balkan Baroque* by the Serbian artist Marina Abramovic (Venice Biennale, 1997).¹²⁹ It took place in a claustrophobic space, where the spectators entered cautiously, like Odysseus in the prologue of Sophocles' *Ajax*: inside, they saw the artist sitting on a pile of cow bones, still covered with meat and blood, which caused an unbearable smell. She polished bones, one at the time, with a metal brush, soap, and water, in order to clean blood and dirt. With this ritual of purification 'to the bone' (performed for six hours a day, over four consecutive days), she forced her audience to face the horrors of a real massacre, as told by her image in a video installation (a shocking story of how rats are forced to kill each other, in Balkans): the whole performance was a metaphor of the civil war which was taking place, at that time, in her country, the former Yugoslavia. As the world watched, for a decade, no Ajax, nor Hector's sword, could stop the killing.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of Ajax

To my knowledge, there are no extensive studies on the reception of Sophocles' *Ajax*, besides critical editions and specific essays. As for Ajax as a character, in general, there are publications dedicated to single occurrences, since Homer's *Iliad*, in literature, fine arts, and theater, and some partial surveys, such as an essay covering a few centuries of Italian literature: Pannunzio (2014).

¹²⁸ The slogan was also cited by rock bands, such as The Doors ("Touch me"), and Grateful Dead (<http://www.whitegum.com/introjs.htm?songfile/KINGSOLO.HTM>). Among other slogans which followed, "Stronger than Grease" curiously resonates with "Greece" (perhaps it meant that Ajax was stronger than all other Greeks?). See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ajax_\(cleaning_product\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ajax_(cleaning_product)), (accessed 04.04.2016).

¹²⁹ See <http://www.li-ma.nl/site/catalogue/art/marina-abramovic/balkan-baroque/9538#> (accessed 2.2.2016).

Also, a thesis entitled *A study of the impact and reception of the myth of Ajax and Sophocles' Ajax in western culture*, by Etta Chatterjee (King's College, London) is currently in progress, under the supervision of Prof. Edith Hall.¹³⁰ See also Markantonatos (2012). The last chapters are dedicated, respectively, to the reception of Sophocles' tragedies in ancient times (pp. 579–99), to his influence on modern literature and arts (pp. 601–18), and onstage (pp. 641–60).

Single themes, or peculiar aspects of the tragedy, such as the suicide, have been treated in recent conferences and their proceedings: see, for instance, Most/Ozbek (2015). The most relevant features of the plot, and of the main characters, are treated in collective volumes, or handbooks, on the reception of Greek drama, listed below (selection of further readings). When possible, for important stage productions (such as those produced by INDA, or *Seven Sicknesses*), I cited in footnotes the reviews published online by: *Stratagemmi. Prospettive teatrali* (stratagemmi.it), *Dionysus ex Machina* (dionysusexmachina.it), and *Didaskalia. The Journal for Ancient Performance* (didaskalia.net).

The main productions and adaptations of *Ajax* are also studied by research centers, such as the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (Oxford), and Fondazione INDA (Syracuse). Most of them are recorded online in their databases, and examined in their publications (*Dioniso, New Voices in Classical Reception Studies*): see below (other resources).

Selection of Further Readings (and other Resources)

Literature

- Easterling, P. E. (ed.) (1997) *The Cambridge Companion to Greek tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grafton, A./Most, G. W./Settis, S. (eds.) (2010) *The classical tradition*. Cambridge MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Kovacs, G./Marshall, C. W. (eds.) (2011) *Classics and Comics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kovacs, G./Marshall, C. W. (eds.) (2015) *Son of Classics and Comics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fine Arts

- Moog-Grünwald, M. (ed.) (2010) *The Reception of Myth and Mythology* (Brill's New Pauly Supplements, 4). Leiden-Boston: Brill.

130 See above, note 8.

Reid, J. D. (1993) *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300–1990s*, 2 volumes. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stage and Screen

- Bosher, K./Macintosh, F./McConnell, J./Rankine, P. (eds.) (2015) *The Oxford Handbook of Greek Drama in the Americas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Flashar, H. (1991) *Inszenierung der Antike: das Griechische Drama auf der Bühne der Neuzeit*. München: Beck (revised edition 2009: *Das griechische Drama auf der Bühne. Von der frühen Neuzeit bis zur Gegenwart*).
- Foley, H. P. (2012) *Reimagining Greek Tragedy on American Stage*. Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press.
- Hall, E./Macintosh, F./Wrigley, A. (eds.) (2004) *Dionysus since 69: Greek tragedy at the dawn of the third millennium*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Van Zyl Smit, B. (ed.) (2016) *A Handbook to the Reception of Greek Drama*. Malden (MA) – Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Winkler, M. M. (1991) *Classics and the Cinema*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press.
- Winkler, M. M. (ed.) (2007) *Troy from Homer's Iliad to Hollywood Epic*. Malden (MA) – Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Winkler, M. M. (ed.) (2015) *Return to Troy. New Essays on the Hollywood Epic*. Leiden – Boston: Brill.

Other Resources

Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD). An international research center with a performance database on ancient drama and its reception: a list of ancient and modern productions, with bibliography and other references, and news about annual conferences, events, and publications, may be found online at <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/>; the archive and library which gather publications, photos, video recordings, and other materials on theater productions, may be consulted by appointment on site (APGRD, Oxford, UK).

Archivio Fondazione INDA, Syracuse, Italy. The main center of studies on ancient drama in Italy, with its own productions hosted at the Greek theater of Syracuse, since 1914, and a journal on ancient drama, *Dioniso*. The list of past productions is online (indafondazione.org), the archive and library which gather publications, photos, and video recordings may be consulted by appointment at the Fondazione INDA (Palazzo Greco, Ortigia, Siracusa).

Centro di Ricerca Interdipartimentale Multimediale sul Teatro Antico (Crimta), Università di Pavia. This is a research center on ancient theater that offers a catalogue of video recordings (online at <http://crimta.unipv.it/>), an archive, and a library (with a special Fund entitled to Professor Umberto Albini) which may be consulted by appointment at San Tommaso, University of Pavia, Italy.

Classical studies at Open University, Milton Keynes, UK. An international research center on classical receptions, which offers an online journal (New Voices in Classical Reception Studies), and a database on classical reception in Late Twentieth Century Drama and Poetry in English (since 1970) <http://www2.open.ac.uk/ClassicalStudies/GreekPlays/index.html> (database currently offline—June 2016).

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Philoctetes

Eric Dugdale

Sophocles' Philoctetes is a war play first performed at Athens in 409 BC, when the city was in the midst of a bitter Peloponnesian war against Sparta and her allies. Its eponymous protagonist, a distinguished veteran of the first Trojan War, is abandoned by the Greeks as they sail to Troy to wage a second war. Bitten on the foot by a snake at the sanctuary of Chryse en route to Troy, Philoctetes is marooned by order of the Atreidae (Agamemnon and Menelaus) and Odysseus on the island of Lemnos when the foul odor of his suppurating wound becomes intolerable to his companions and his cries of pain disrupt their sacrifices. He survives as a castaway thanks to the bow and arrows bequeathed to him by his comrade Heracles, given in gratitude for his willingness to light Heracles' funeral pyre and thus put him out of the agony he was suffering through the poison of Nessus, as presented in Sophocles' Women of Trachis. In the tenth year of the war, the Greeks learn from the Trojan seer Helenus that the city will fall only with the help of Heracles' bow. So Odysseus and Neoptolemus, accompanied by a crew of Neoptolemus' men, set out on a special mission to retrieve the bow. Odysseus assigns to Neoptolemus the difficult task of interacting with Philoctetes because his chances of success are greater: since Neoptolemus arrived late to Troy (his name means "new to war"), Philoctetes does not hate him as he does Odysseus.

This is the background to Sophocles' Philoctetes, much of it provided in the prologue of the play, in which Odysseus briefs Neoptolemus and guides him to the cave that is Philoctetes' dwelling. Most audience members in the original performance would have been familiar with Philoctetes and his crucial role in the fall of Troy from epic poetry and earlier dramatic productions on both the tragic and

* Four undergraduates at Gustavus Adolphus College collaborated with me on this piece. Ellen Stoll researched and wrote the section on Schubert's musical setting of Mayrhofer's poem (below, 115–8), Nicholas Beck and Caitlin Juvland researched and wrote most of the text about the Disney film and TV series (below, 137–9); and Teriq Canales researched Gillon-Lethière's painting (below, 112). We would like to acknowledge the help of a number of individuals in preparing this article: Julian Armitstead, Patricia Branstad, Rebecca Benefiel, Daniel Donnet, Kyle Dugdale, Martin Flashar, Jon Grinnell, Guy Hoare, Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, Matthew Panciera, Patricia Snapp, and Esther Wang.

comic stage; but a number of key elements of the play can confidently be credited to Sophocles' creativity.

In Literature

Philoctetes is mentioned in both the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. In the former, Odysseus, whose ability to wield his own special bow will bring destruction to the suitors in the poem's climax on Ithaca, informs the Phaeacians that he was second only to Philoctetes in his bowmanship on the Trojan battlefield (Homer, *Odyssey* 8. 219–20), while Nestor narrates Philoctetes' safe return home after the war (3. 188–90). Philoctetes is mentioned in the catalogue of Greek ships in *Iliad* Book 2, where he commands seven ships of skilled archers. Their participation in the war is contrasted with the fate of their leader for whom they yearned, described as follows (Homer, *Iliad* 2. 21–5):

But he lay on an island suffering mighty pains,
on sacred Lemnos, where the sons of the Achaeans had left him
in agony from the evil wound of the malignant water snake;
there he lay in distress; but soon the Argives
beside their ships were going to remember King Philoctetes.¹

The description of Philoctetes lying sidelined from war and aggrieved by his mistreatment by the Achaeans parallels that of Achilles, described just a few lines earlier in the catalogue as lying grieving for Briseis (*Iliad* 2. 688–94); he too would be remembered by the Achaeans (*Iliad* 19. 63–4), since without him they found themselves unable to defeat the Trojans. Sophocles takes this structural parallelism and developed it into a central tension of his play. The bond that Philoctetes feels towards Neoptolemus from the moment he introduces himself as “son of Achilles” (*Philoctetes* 240–1) is also the source of the latter's distress, since in using subterfuge against Philoctetes he is betraying his noble father (“it is not at all in my nature to do anything by evil scheming—neither my own nature nor, I am told, that of my father,” 88–9).

Philoctetes also featured in the poems that comprised the Epic Cycle. Naturally, he appeared in the *Cypria* (ca. 7th century BC), which narrated the events leading up to the plot of the *Iliad*. Although only a barebones summary survives, found in the *Chrestomathia* of Proclus (5th century AD), it indicates that the poem described how Philoctetes was bitten by a water snake and

¹ All translations are mine, unless otherwise stated.

abandoned on Lemnos on account of his stinking wound (cf. *Philoctetes* 876, 890–1, 1032 for the motif of foul odor picked up Sophocles). In Proclus' summary this incident is immediately followed by a falling out between Achilles and Agamemnon; again it seems telling that the Philoctetes and Achilles episodes appear in close juxtaposition. In the *Little Iliad*, another post-Homeric epic poem also usually dated to the 7th century BC and also preserved only in summary form, a prophecy made by the Trojan seer Helenus after he is captured by Odysseus regarding the capture of Troy prompts Diomedes to bring Philoctetes back from Lemnos to Troy, where he is healed by Machaon, fights Paris in single combat and kills him.

Sophocles makes the prophecy of Helenus a central element of his play, and handles it in a way that is highly original. Different versions of the prophecy are told by Odysseus, Neoptolemus, the "Merchant" (the agent sent by Odysseus impersonating a merchant), and Heracles in quick succession; what they mention or omit is tailored to the needs of the moment. Odysseus convinces Neoptolemus that both he and the bow are essential to the capture of Troy (*Philoctetes* 113–5), but on Odysseus' orders Neoptolemus tells Philoctetes only of his vital part in Troy's capture (ll. 60–1, 343–7, 352–3), with no mention of the importance of the bow. Later the Merchant relates Helenus' prophecy; in his version, it is Philoctetes' presence at Troy that is the precondition of its capture (ll. 604–19), and Neoptolemus recognizes belatedly that it is not only the bow but also Philoctetes who is needed (ll. 839–42). This is the version that seems closest to that of the summary of the *Little Iliad*, down to the detail that Diomedes has been sent to fetch Philoctetes (cf. ll. 1333–4), a detail that in the ambit of this play is a pure fiction.² Later Neoptolemus tries to persuade Philoctetes to accompany him to Troy, suggesting that the two of them are to take the city together (ll. 919–20), and hinting at a prophecy (ll. 921–2); he recounts the prophecy of Helenus to Philoctetes only much later; in his version of it, he states: "with this bow and with me you will be revealed to be the one who sacks the towers" (ll. 1334–5). In the meantime, Odysseus tries various tactics: he presents his mission as the will of Zeus (ll. 989–90) and tells Philoctetes that he is destined to take Troy (l. 998), but when that does not work suggests that Philoctetes is not actually needed to take the city now that his bow is in their

2 Diomedes also accompanied Odysseus in Euripides' *Philoctetes* (Dio Chrysostom, *Orations* 52. 14). This version also appears in the 1st/2nd century AD *Epitome* of the *Library* falsely ascribed to Apollodorus (*Epitome* 5. 8), suggesting that it was the dominant tradition, since this work tends to privilege the standard version and draws on the works of much earlier mythographic historians, including Acusilaus of Argos (6th century BC) and Pherecydes of Athens (5th century BC).

possession (ll. 1055–6), even suggesting that he or Teucer might wield it. Thus the prophecy is repeatedly manipulated and used to bring pressure to bear on Neoptolemus and then Philoctetes. These deceptions undermine the very efforts to bring Philoctetes to Troy, and by the end of the play Neoptolemus sees himself as having no option but to take Philoctetes home. Fulfillment of the prophecy seems far from certain until Heracles appears as *deus ex machina* and brings about resolution of the impasse, indicating to Neoptolemus that “neither do you have the strength to conquer the land of Troy without him, nor does he without you,” (ll. 1435–6). Thus in the future predicted by Heracles at the end of the play, Philoctetes and Neoptolemus are both ascribed a crucial role in the conquest of Troy. Sophocles may have drawn the idea for this from the *Little Iliad*, in which Odysseus fetching Neoptolemus from Skyros is the next main episode after Diomedes brings Philoctetes back from Lemnos (cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1459a). The presence of both of these absent heroes may have been presented in the poem as vital to the success of the Achaeans.³

Philoctetes was the protagonist of plays by all three of the great tragedians.⁴ Aeschylus and Euripides also treated the same theme, the expedition to fetch Philoctetes and his bow to Troy; the date of Aeschylus’ *Philoctetes* is not known; Euripides produced his *Philoctetes* alongside his *Medea*, *Dictys* and satyr-play *Theristai* in 431 BC. As well as a few surviving fragments and part of their hypotheses, we can draw on the evidence of Dio Chrysostom of Prusa (1st–2nd century AD), who compares all three versions in his *Oration* 52, and also paraphrases the prologue of Euripides’ play (Dio Chrysostom, *Oration* 59). Dio’s remarks allow us to infer both what Sophocles’ play shares with its predecessors and what is distinctive. Unlike Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides have Odysseus interact directly with Philoctetes. With a greater concern for verisimilitude than Aeschylus, Euripides has Athena disguise Odysseus’ appearance to avoid recognition.⁵ In both plays, Odysseus shows his characteristic

3 A variant is found in ps.-Apollodorus, *Epitome*: here it is the Greek seer Calchas who prophesied that the bow and arrows of Heracles were necessary for the Greeks to capture Troy (*Epitome* 5.8), while the Trojan Helenus, kidnapped by Odysseus, revealed that Neoptolemus’ participation was a necessary precondition for conquest (5.10). This version agrees with that of Euripides’ *Philoctetes* in having Odysseus and Diomedes fetch Philoctetes; it identifies Odysseus and Phoenix as the ones sent to get Neoptolemus.

4 For comparisons of the handling by the three tragedians, see Gantz (1993) 459, 589–90, 635–7; Woodruff (2012) 127; Schein (2013) 3–7.

5 For an accessible introduction, text, translation and commentary on Euripides’ *Philoctetes*, see Collard/Cropp/Gibert (2004) 1–34; it also includes useful discussion of the Aeschylean and Sophoclean versions. Müller (2000) offers a more exhaustive treatment of the same, including a discussion of earlier scholarly reconstructions.

resourcefulness in inventing a story that paves the way for a favorable reception. In Aeschylus' play Odysseus portrays the Greeks in dire straits, with Agamemnon dead and Odysseus charged with an ignominious crime, a scenario that would lure Philoctetes with the prospect of saving the day and exulting over his rival. In Euripides' play Odysseus poses as a friend of Palamedes, hated by Odysseus for having exposed his ruse to avoid being drafted to join the Greek expedition. Already in the *Cypria* Odysseus engineers his death.⁶ In Euripides' prologue when Philoctetes enters to find Odysseus at his makeshift dwelling and learns that he is a Greek, he is about to shoot him until Odysseus replies: "but I have suffered at their hands such things that I should rightly be to you a friend as to them an enemy," (Dio Chrysostom, *Orations* 59. 8). Once Philoctetes learns that Odysseus has had Palamedes killed on trumped-up charges of treason and that the man who stands before him is an exile, he seethes with indignation at Odysseus and offers to share with his fellow outcast his food and shelter. Thus the bond of friendship through shared misfortune and common enemies that we find in Sophocles' play has its antecedent in that of Euripides, produced 22 years earlier. Sophocles' Philoctetes expresses this affinity cogently when he says to Neoptolemus and his crew (403–6), "you have sailed here, strangers, bearing for me a clear token of suffering, and you harmonize with me, so that I recognize that these are the actions of the Atreidae and Odysseus." Typically such tokens would be halves of a coin or other readily identifiable symbol. The legitimacy of an emissary could thus be confirmed by the token (*symbolon*) he carried, which would match up with that held by the other person. In both plays, Philoctetes' own experience of suffering at the hands of the Achaean leaders lends credence to the false stories he is told, and also provokes empathy for his interlocutor.

Neoptolemus' participation in the mission is, however, Sophocles' invention.⁷ The inclusion of Neoptolemus allows Sophocles to develop the dynamics of the interactions differently. Neoptolemus is the young recruit, the ephebe, whom Odysseus is training in the art of deception.⁸ Odysseus and Philoctetes compete to establish their influence on Neoptolemus, and both call him "son," playing surrogates for a father he never knew. Sophocles' deployment of Neoptolemus continues Euripides' interest in verisimilitude: by co-opting the son of Philoctetes' trusted friend Achilles, Odysseus can more easily dupe Philoctetes. Through Dio (*Oration* 52. 12, 59. 1) we learn that Euripides'

6 Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 10. 31. 2 reports the *Cypria* as his source.

7 For a sustained discussion of the originality of Sophocles' handling, see Schlesinger (1968).

8 Vidal-Naquet (1972) 161–84.

Odysseus sees himself as risking life and limb for public good out of love of honor (*philotimia*). In Sophocles' play it is Neoptolemus whose love of distinction convinces him to accept his mission (*Philoctetes* 81–2, 116–20).

Dio points out another Sophoclean innovation (*Orations* 52. 15): "he has composed his chorus not of the inhabitants of the place, as in Aeschylus and Euripides, but of those sailing in the ship along with Odysseus and Neoptolemus." This has at least two major influences on the play. First, the chorus of sailors provide a sounding-board and counterpoint for Neoptolemus as he wrestles with difficult decisions. It is they who first express pity towards Philoctetes (Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 169–90). Their pity contrasts with Neoptolemus' initial rejection of it in viewing Philoctetes' afflictions as heaven-sent (ll. 191–200). But their later expressions of pity (ll. 317–8, 507) are complicated by their complicity in the deceit, so that we no longer know whether they are real or feigned, and their pity, like that of earlier passers-by (ll. 305–11, 317–8), does not translate into action; at the height of Philoctetes' helplessness, they urge Neoptolemus to abandon him (ll. 828–38).⁹ Neoptolemus, by contrast, begins to feel a "strange pity" (l. 965) as he begins to develop a relationship with Philoctetes and gains his trust; this pity eventually drives him to reverse his decision, even at great personal risk. Secondly, by staging a chorus of sailors rather than a chorus of Lemnians, Sophocles presents a Philoctetes who is utterly alone. His is not the bucolic solitude of a shepherd playing his pan-pipes, as the chorus points out (ll. 213–4), but the pained loneliness of a man betrayed and abandoned, filled with hate and despair, eking out a miserable existence as he fights daily for survival. His loneliness is emphasized by his frequent apostrophe of the landscape and the birds and beasts that he hunts; even with these, his sole companions, his relationship is tortured. Euripides' *Philoctetes*, by contrast, included a character called Actor, who was a regular visitor and probably gave him handouts.¹⁰

Heracles' intervention at the end of the play is also a Sophoclean innovation. Heracles comes with the moral and social capital to resolve the impasse; like Odysseus in Sophocles' *Ajax*, whose claim to friendship overrides Agamemnon's intransigence, Heracles has the purchase of a deep friendship with Philoctetes as well as the authority to give orders as *deus ex machina*. Philoctetes' response emphasizes both aspects ("O you who speak with a voice I have longed for, and have appeared at last, I will not disobey your words," *Philoctetes* 1445–7). Thus in the end loyalty and trust triumph over betrayal and

9 See Blondell (1989) 193–5 for a comparison of the chorus' and Neoptolemus' responses of pity.

10 Dio Chrysostom, *Orations* 52. 8, cf. *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus* 2455, fr. 17.

mistrust, and for Philoctetes Troy is now the destination to which he is led by an alignment of “mighty Fate, the advice of friends and the all-subduing god,” (ll. 1466–7). Heracles also foretells future events at Troy, including Philoctetes’ healing and the conquest of Troy. But his warning to “show reverence to the things of the gods” (ll. 1441) offers a disquieting allusion to Neoptolemus’ future impiety, when in sacking Troy he executes Priam at the altar of Zeus.

As well as his *Philoctetes*, Sophocles also composed a *Philoctetes at Troy*; in the few fragments that survive (fr. 697–703) we encounter the piercing cries and unpleasant smell characteristic of Philoctetes’ suffering in the surviving play, but also reference to the serpent-headed staff of Asclepius that points to healing (cf. *Philoctetes* 1437).¹¹ Numerous other plays about Philoctetes were staged, including tragedies by Achaëus of Eretria (5th century BC), Philocles, Aeschylus’ nephew (5th century BC), Antiphon (late 5th–early 4th century BC), and Theodectes of Phaselis (4th century BC), as well as comedies by Epicharmus of Cos (late 6th–early 5th century BC), Strattis (late 5th–early 4th century BC), and Antiphanes (4th century BC), but of these little is known.

Attic comedy frequently drew on epic and tragedy for parody and meta-theater. In Aristophanes’ *Acharnians*, Dicaeopolis asks Euripides for rags so that he can disguise himself before addressing the Athenian assembly; among the costumes that Euripides offers him from his past productions are the tattered clothes “of the beggar Philoctetes,” (*Acharnians* 423–4). In a fragment from his lost *Women at the Dionysia*, Timocles (4th century BC) also has a character cite Philoctetes along with other notable protagonists from tragedy to illustrate the benefits of watching tragedy: “our mind forgets its own suffering and gets entranced in that of someone else, and leaves happy—and educated to boot . . . One guy, who’s a pauper, discovers that Telephus was poorer still, and already he bears his poverty more easily . . . Someone has lost a child: Niobe cheers him up. Someone is crippled: he sees Philoctetes,” (fr. 6, ll. 5–7, 9–11, 14–5).¹² Thus, like the old man in the Desert of Drize in Dr. Seuss’ story, tragedy provides a welcome reminder that “Some people are much more, oh, ever so much more, oh, muchly much-much more unlucky than you!” But Timocles’ comic character also taps into more serious philosophical discussions about the didactic value of tragedy and its affective impact. Indeed, we see the same term used by Aristotle to describe tragedy as entrancing the viewer (*Poetics* 1450a32–34); the verb ψυχαγωγέω (literally “to lead on the *psychê*”) is hard to translate, especially since *psychê* (“soul”) is the seat of both thought and emotion. The powerful effect on the soul is presented as coming through

11 For the surviving fragments of Sophocles’ *Philoctetes at Troy*, see Radt (1977) 482–4.

12 Kassel R. (1989) 758–9.

seeing Philoctetes' plight; the viewer identifies with the sufferer and at the same time distances himself from the character whose affliction he recognizes as being of a different order of magnitude than his own, and he goes home happy. Indeed, the fragment is excerpted by the Greek 5th century AD editor Stobaeus (*Anthology* 4. 56. 19) in a collection of consolatory passages.¹³ It is Philoctetes' suffering on which Stobaeus focuses as a source of consolation, not his subsequent healing and reintegration; we see a similar pattern mirrored in tragedy itself, especially in its choral odes, where mythical exempla are frequently adduced to console someone in suffering.

So, too, Plutarch remarks (*Moralia* 18c) that we enjoy looking at Aristophon's suffering Philoctetes and Silanion's dying Jocasta (works by a famous painter and sculptor respectively), though in real life we consider a sick person with festering wounds an unpleasant sight and avoid him. Plutarch's broader point is that we can admire a work for its excellence in representation (*mimêsis*) even if what is represented (suffering, suicide) is not in itself admirable. The appeal of such works lies also in their representation of suffering and death, universals of the human condition, in a context in which they can be contemplated within the safe confines of art rather than through direct experience.

Aristotle discusses Philoctetes and Neoptolemus in his exploration of self-control. He adduces them as outlier cases, their extreme circumstances serving to help reach a nuanced understanding of self-control. He views Neoptolemus' inconstancy in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* as commendable, since through it he abandoned his decision to lie at the behest of Odysseus; thus, in this case inconstancy is preferable to self-control (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1146a19–22; cf. 1151b17–9). He excuses Philoctetes, in Theodectes' play, for having succumbed to extreme pain after attempting to resist it (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1150b6–9).

It is hard to gauge the influence of Sophocles' version where it is not explicitly referred to, since representations often draw on Philoctetes as a mythical archetype rather than a character in a particular play. Sophocles' *Philoctetes* helped him win first place in the City Dionysia of 409 BC, but it seems that Euripides' *Philoctetes*, which finished last in the same competition, had a greater influence in antiquity, if the number of attributable references are a reliable indication, mirroring the general popularity of Euripides' plays after his death.¹⁴

13 See Hanink (2014) 194–7.

14 For example, Stobaeus cites Euripides' *Philoctetes* eight times, that of Sophocles only once; Plutarch cites Euripides' play seven times and Aeschylus' twice, but makes no mention of Sophocles': see Müller (2000) 76–7.

A tradition that can be dated back to Hellenistic authors of the 3rd century BC connects Philoctetes to Italy. Like many of his Greek compatriots, Philoctetes is blown off course on the way home from Troy. He is shipwrecked, and founds a number of cities in the region of Calabria at the toe of the boot of Italy, including Crimissa, Macalla, Chone, and Petelia, builds a sanctuary to Apollo the Wanderer (*Alaeus*), and dedicates the bow of Heracles to the god. He eventually dies and is buried there, and receives a cult at his tomb.¹⁵ This is part of a wider pattern of Roman appropriation of Greek myth; Philoctetes was a particularly suitable candidate to be adopted by the Romans given his mistreatment by the Greeks.

The Roman tragic playwright Accius (2nd–1st century BC) composed a play titled *Philocteta*. Although only a few snippets of the play have reached us, through quotation by lexicographers, grammarians and other authors, it is clear that Accius' play was widely read, mentioned as it is by Varro, Cicero, Ovid, Quintilian, Apuleius, Censorinus, and Macrobius.¹⁶ Attempts to reconstruct Aeschylus' and Euripides' plays on the basis of their footprint in the surviving extracts of Accius' work as well as to identify which of the three Athenian playwrights' versions most influenced his run the risk of circularity. But the evidence suggests that Accius drew most heavily on Euripides, while also incorporating elements of Aeschylus' and Sophocles' treatments. In Accius' version, Odysseus himself carries out the deception, but the friendly reception by Philoctetes of his guests and the dramatization of Philoctetes' suffering seem to reflect Sophocles' handling.

The Roman author who engages most frequently with Philoctetes is the great orator, politician and philosopher Cicero (1st century BC); he mentions him a total of eleven times across a number of his works. Cicero draws primarily on the version of Accius, a personal acquaintance of his in his youth. For Cicero, Philoctetes presents a fascinating case study of the limits of human endurance. As a Stoic, Cicero viewed the influence of strong emotions such as fear as problematic, since they interfered with rational judgment. So he

15 This tradition is found in the works of 3rd century BC Hellenistic authors Euphron of Chalcis and Lycophron (see Lycophron, *Alexandra* 911–29 and Tzetzes, *ad Lycophron* 911), as well as in ps.-Aristotle *De Mirabilibus* ("On amazing things") 107. See also Strabo, *Geography* 6. 3. 6, ps.-Apollodorus, *Epitome* 6. 15b, and Servius, *In Vergili Aeneidem Comentarii* ["Commentaries on Virgil's *Aeneid*"] 3. 40; Strabo quotes as his source the lost commentary on the Homeric Catalogue of Ships by Apollodorus the Athenian (2nd c. BC). Diomedes and Idomeneus are other Greek heroes linked to Magna Graecia in southern Italy. Giannelli (1963) 161–9 provides a collation and discussion of relevant primary sources.

16 For extensive discussion of its relation to Greek predecessors, see Müller (1997) 260–84.

censures Philoctetes for his loud cries, evidence that he became “womanly” in succumbing to pain instead of showing the fortitude becoming a man (*De Finibus* [“On ends”] 2. 29. 94–5; cf. *Tusculanae Disputationes* [“Tusculan disputations”] 2. 14. 33, 2. 23. 55). At the same time, he uses Philoctetes as a case in point to refute Epicurus’ thesis that extreme pain is brief (*De Finibus* 2. 29. 93–5), cites Philoctetes as an example of endurance in the face of acute pain (*De Finibus* 5. 11. 32), and excuses his outbursts (*Tusculanae Disputationes* 2. 7. 19). His inconsistent responses of reproach and sympathy seem to reflect an acknowledgment of the extreme situation with which Philoctetes is dealing, an awareness arising from his own experience of banishment through the actions of his enemy Clodius. Indeed his own writings betray despair (*Epistulae ad Familiares* [“Letters to friends”] 9. 5) and even hints that he was contemplating suicide (*Epistulae ad Atticum* [“Letters to Atticus”] 68. 5) because of the seeming hopelessness of his situation, but later he could look back on exile with defiance and a cosmopolitan position that robbed it of its sting (*Paradoxa Stoicorum* [“Paradoxes of the Stoics”] 18; 27–8).

Philoctetes also features prominently in the *Metamorphoses* of the Roman poet Ovid (1st century BC—1st century AD). In Book 13 (ll. 5–122), Ajax denounces Odysseus, his rival in the contest for Achilles’ armor, and presents Philoctetes’ pitiful abandonment on Lemnos as an example of Odysseus’ perfidy alongside the unjust killing of Palamedes, as Euripides’ *Philoctetes* did (*Metamorphoses* 13. 45–54).¹⁷ Odysseus replies by defending his action, putting a positive spin on it (13. 315–8): “I will not deny that I advised that he exempt himself from the hardships of war and travel and try to soothe his fierce pains through rest. He listened—and lives!” Odysseus goes on to challenge Ajax to take his place on the mission to fetch Philoctetes, then adds (13. 324–7): “The Simoïs river will flow backwards, Mt. Ida stand leafless, and Greece send aid to Troy before the cleverness of that blockhead Ajax will be of help to the Greeks should I decide to stop using my faculties on your behalf.” Odysseus’ speech offers an intriguing “what if” scenario not unlike the hypothetical scenarios of the rhetorical exercises known as *controversiae*. In the end, however, Odysseus fulfills his destiny, fetches Philoctetes and his bow, and thereby ends the war (13. 399–403).

Ovid revisits the story of Philoctetes under different circumstances in his *Epistulae Ex Ponto* [“Letters from Pontus”], written to friends in Rome from exile on the Black Sea. Now the poet’s status as an exile dominates his very identity, and he sees himself as a tragic character, banished from society. In

17 Dio Chrysostom, *Orations* 59. 9; see Müller (1997) 285, 290–6.

his *Tristia* ["Sorrows"], another collection of poems written from exile, he must rely on surrogates, his letters, to convey his messages to his loved ones (*Tristia* 3. 1–2; cf. Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 497–9); "rarely does a sailor traverse the wide sea from Italy, rarely does he visit this harborless shore," (*Tristia* 3. 12. 37–8; cf. Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 219–21). Like Philoctetes in Sophocles' play, he endures isolation, deprivation, the frost of winter, an inhospitable environment, and countless other miseries, yet is innocent of wrongdoing (*Tristia* 3. 2. 5; cf. *Philoctetes* 684–6). Like Philoctetes, he is sick and despondent, wracked by pain and grief, and longs for death, but it is denied to him. In the opening lines of his *Tristia*, speaking in the first person, he describes its verses as "lame couplets that halt in alternate verses," and as "poetry which suits its own circumstances" of unadulterated misery (*Tristia* 3. 1. 10–1; cf. 3. 7. 9–10; cf. *Philoctetes* 206–7, 291, 701–2), adding that any lack of polish is because "I blushed to be more finely dressed than my master," (*Tristia* 3. 1. 13–4). It is in this context that Ovid, in his *Epistulae Ex Ponto*, mentions Philoctetes in a catalogue of tragic characters (Capaneus, Amphiaras, Odysseus, Philoctetes) whose suffering—and, by implication, the poetry it inspires—brought them fame. Ironically, the archrivals Odysseus/Ulysses and Philoctetes must share a couplet, with Philoctetes fittingly assigned the pentameter, the shorter, "lame" line that is missing a foot (*Epistulae Ex Ponto* 3. 1. 53–4):

If he had wandered less, Ulysses would have been less famous:
Philoctetes has great fame because of his wound.

Their shared suffering brings the much-enduring and far-wandering Odysseus and the wounded hero Philoctetes together. Philoctetes occupies the final and climactic position in the list of mythological exempla, his situation most closely corresponding to that of the exile Ovid, who now appends himself to the list in a playful addendum (*Epistulae Ex Ponto* ["Letters from Pontus"] 3. 1. 55–6):

If there is a place among such great names for the small,
I too have been made conspicuous by my downfall.

The Roman poet and satirist Martial (1st–2nd century AD) also uses Philoctetes as a comparandum in his *Epigram* 2. 84. In this short poem, Martial compares Philoctetes to a certain Sertorius:

The hero son of Poeas was effeminate and easy for men:
this is how Venus is said to have taken revenge for Paris' wounds.

The reason why Sertorius the Sicilian licks cunt is this:
it would seem, Rufus, that he was the one who killed Eryx.

If through association with mythical figures Ovid hopes to elevate himself and his fate, in this poem Martial uses the mythological reference to denigrate Sertorius and bring home his invective as Sertorius surpasses Philoctetes, but in infamy. A prominent scholar spells out succinctly the implications of Martial's perversion of the trope of the mythological comparandum: "If Philoctetes was cursed by Venus with a desire to be anally penetrated as punishment for having killed her favorite, Paris, then Sertorius' desire to perform cunnilingus must have been inflicted upon him by the goddess for an even graver offense, namely for having killed her own son Eryx."¹⁸ Sertorius here displaces Heracles as slayer of Eryx; he thus insinuates himself into a mythological context that more naturally pairs Philoctetes with his best friend. The corollary is that Sertorius' sexual preference is more shameful than that of Philoctetes, since Sertorius places himself in a subservient position with women while Philoctetes does so with men. This satirical representation of Philoctetes as effeminate (*mollis*) and as the passive, penetrated partner reflects Roman attitudes towards expression of extreme emotion as a threat to masculinity and its ideal of manly courage.¹⁹ This link is perhaps made most explicitly in Cicero's admonition to Philoctetes (*De Finibus* ["On ends"] 2. 29. 95) that "it is disgraceful and unmanly to be weakened by pain, to be broken by it, or to succumb to it." This characterization of Philoctetes is not found in Sophocles' play, but represents a later, distinctly Roman inflection.

An interesting point of comparison is Heracles'/Hercules' response to extreme pain in *Hercules Oetaeus* ["Hercules on Oeta"], traditionally ascribed to Seneca the Younger. Hercules' repression of grief (e.g., ll. 1265–78, 1667–94, 1736–46), his courage in the face of death, and acceptance of his fate (e.g., ll. 1472–87, 1609–16) reflect Stoic sensibilities; indeed, it is his *virtus* ("manly courage") that results in his deification ("my *virtus* has provided a way for me now to the stars and to the gods themselves," 1942–3). In this play, his courage inspires Philoctetes who, like Hercules himself (ll. 1969–71), bids Alcmene hold back her tears for her brave son (l. 1836): "the brave forbid mourning, the weak demand it." Indeed, Hercules' example and hortatory words have an inspiring effect on all present, as Philoctetes reports in his narration of the death scene (ll. 1686–90):

18 Williams (2004) 255.

19 Other examples of sexual innuendo related to Philoctetes are Stephanus of Byzantium, *Ethnica* s.v. *Μακάλλας*, scholia on Thucydides 1. 12. 2, Ausonius, *Epigrams* 75. 2–3.

Tears ceased to flow, grief was repelled and vanquished in us too,
 no one lamented his impending death; now we were ashamed to weep.
 Even Alcmene, though her sex urged her to mourn, checked her weeping
 and stood with dry cheeks, a mother now almost comparable to her son.

In the closing scene of Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, Heracles also links the great sufferings he passed through and endured with his "immortal excellence" (ll. 1419–20). He draws a similar link between suffering and glory in Philoctetes' case (ll. 1421–2): "Know for certain that you too are destined to experience the same, to make your life glorious after these sufferings (*ponoi*)."¹ Thus in Sophocles' version, Philoctetes, like Heracles, emerges from his labors acquitting himself and gaining undying renown as a hero.

The *Heroicus* ("On heroes"), a work written in the early 3rd century AD by the Greek sophist L. Flavius Philostratus, is framed as a dialogue between a Phoenician merchant and a vine-dresser in which the latter relates events of the Trojan war as disclosed to him by the resident ghost of Protesilaus. Protesilaus was killed in the first action of the war, and therefore, according to the conceit of the work (*Heroicus* 7), was free to observe events undisturbed; indeed, the vine-dresser assures his conversation partner that Protesilaus has read the epic poems, but can also draw on personal experience as an eyewitness and also enjoys the gift of prophecy. Thus Philostratus' narrative, written for a sophisticated audience well acquainted with earlier literary accounts, has a polemical dimension to it, purporting to offer greater accuracy than those of its predecessors. Its author, L. Flavius Philostratus, originated from Lemnos, and enjoyed enhancing the island's status in his account as well as contradicting received tradition. So Philoctetes was cured not at Troy, but on Lemnos, through application to his wound of medicinal earth drawn from the spot where the god Hephaestus is said to have landed when thrown from Olympus by Zeus (*Heroicus* 28). Philoctetes was not abandoned, but was looked after by countrymen who stayed behind with him. The locals give him part of the island as his reward for driving out the Carians, and he calls it Akesa in honor of his cure (*akos*). He accompanies Diomedes and Neoptolemus voluntarily, after hearing a prophecy spoken by the disembodied head of Orpheus. Philostratus' retelling draws a connection between Philoctetes and Hephaestus, who landed on Lemnos after being cast to earth by Zeus (Homer, *Iliad* 1.589–94); just as the lame god Hephaestus was cared for by the Lemnians, so now the cripple Philoctetes is also cared for, and is cured at the site of Hephaestus' fall. According to the vine-dresser, Protesilaus described Philoctetes at Troy as being in good physical shape, indeed stronger than most men much younger than him; he had a fierce look, and was taciturn and tetchy (*Heroicus* 28).

From around the 5th century AD onwards, western Europe became cut off from the Greek-speaking eastern Mediterranean and would no longer have access to Sophocles' *Philoctetes* for over a millennium. Philoctetes would have been known, if at all, through Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the 14th century *Ovide Moralisé* ("Moralized Ovid"),²⁰ references to him in other works and in the scholia on them, or from the mythological epitomes and compendia that provided summaries of myths. Surviving versions of epitomes include the *Narrationes Fabularum Ovidianarum* ("Accounts of Ovid's Myths"), a précis of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* dated to between the 2nd and 6th centuries AD, and the *Ilias Latina* ("Iliad in Latin"), a Latin version of Homer's *Iliad* in 1070 hexameter lines dating to the 1st century AD; the latter was an important source for the reception of the Trojan cycle through the medieval period.²¹ Surviving compendia include the *Fabulae* ("Stories") ascribed to Hyginus (ca. 2nd century AD), and the three Vatican Mythographies (dating from the 9th through the 12th centuries AD).²²

In the Greek-speaking Byzantine empire, the seven plays of Sophocles that survive today continued to be copied, with the 10th century AD Laurentianus 32.9 and the Leiden BPG 60A palimpsest being the earliest surviving medieval exemplars. The 10th century Byzantine lexicon known as the *Suda* and 12th century commentary by Eustathius of Thessalonica also contains many quotations from Sophocles' plays. Most of the surviving medieval manuscripts date to the 14th and 15th centuries AD and include only the so-called "Byzantine triad" of Sophoclean plays (*Ajax*, *Electra*, *Oedipus Tyrannus*) on which

20 Philoctetes makes appearances at *Ovide Moralisé* 12. 1495–1506 and 13. 1336–1441; these passages draw on the *Ilias Latina* and Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie*. The *Ovide Moralisé* was a widely read moralizing French version of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, with additions.

21 Philoctetes is only mentioned in passing in the catalogue of ships at *Ilias Latina* 217.

22 Of eight mentions of Philoctetes in Hyginus' *Fabulae*, that at 102 is the fullest, relating his wounding by the snake, and presenting this as a consequence of Hera's enmity because of his assistance to Heracles; while on Lemnos, he was accompanied by a shepherd of King Actor named Iphimachus, the son of Dolopion; he was brought to Troy by Odysseus and Diomedes, on Agamemnon's orders. This version broadly follows the plot of Euripides' *Philoctetes*, which Hyginus may have accessed via a hypothesis or plot summary, though the name Actor has been transposed from the shepherd to the king he serves. The First and Second Vatican Mythographers (First Vatican Mythographer, 59; Second Vatican Mythographer, 192) both draw directly on Servius' account (Servius, *In Vergilii Aeneidem Comentarii* ["Commentaries on Virgil's *Aeneid*"] 3. 402), according to which Philoctetes was accidentally wounded by one of Heracles' poisoned arrows as a consequence of his stamping on Heracles' tomb when constrained to reveal its location.

Byzantine commentators focused in this period. Byzantine scholia derive from commentaries by the scholars Manuel Moschopoulos, Thomas Magister, and Demetrius Triclinius, writing in the late 13th and early 14th centuries; they also drew on scholia by Hellenistic commentators.²³ Among the early surviving manuscripts is one whose provenience is probably southern Italy, dating to 1282.²⁴ Wider exposure to Greek literature among Italian humanists did not occur until the 15th century; in 1423 the Italian humanist Giovanni Aurispa brought back with him from Constantinople to Venice 238 manuscripts of classical authors, including the famous Codex Laurentianus 32.9 mentioned above, containing all seven of Sophocles' plays.

The first printed edition of Sophocles' works was published by the Aldine Press in 1502. Latin translations followed, first that of Giovanni Gabia (Venice, 1543), then that of Veit Winshemius, a student of the German theologian Phillip Melanchthon (Frankfurt, 1546). Winshemius' translation, titled *Interpretatio tragoediarum Sophoclis ad utilitatem iuventutis* ("A translation of Sophocles' tragedies to help the youth"), drew directly on the lectures of Melanchthon at Wittenberg in the previous year. For Melanchthon, tragedy's purpose was to provide a moral education by depicting examples of divine punishment of crimes by which "the people's rude and savage minds were turned towards moderation and the constraint of passions by considering the examples of terrible fates."²⁵ Tragedy privileged extreme cases rather than more moderate ones, "so that they might penetrate into the soul and lodge there." Melanchthon reports that he himself shudders as he reads the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides. Similarly, Winshemius notes in his foreword dedicating his translation to Edward VI that tragedy offers examples of just punishment of evil, with Orestes' revenge against Clytemnestra and Aegisthus for adultery comparable to biblical exempla such as Sodom, the Egyptian Pharaoh, and Cain. Thus for Melanchthon and his students, the works of the ancients pointed to a casuistic

23 For the history of the transmission of Sophocles' plays, see Finglass (2012).

24 This palimpsest is referred to as manuscript G (= Biblioteca Laurenziana Conventi Soppressi 152). Its subscription gives a date of 1282 and identifies the writer as Augustius; he is likely a Greek from southern Italy ordained in the Latin rite. References in its scholia to the 12th century Byzantine scholar John Tzetzes offer a *terminus post quem*, suggesting that its source was brought over to Italy in the 13th century. The codex contained letters in Greek of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II dating to 1250. These letters corroborate other evidence that Greek literature was appreciated at the court of Frederick II. See Diller (1954) and Turyn (1970) 110–5.

25 From Melanchthon's 1545 essay *Cohortatio ad legendas tragoedias et comoedias* ("Exhortation to read tragedies and comedies"), published in Joachim Camerarius' edition of Terence's comedies (Leipzig, 1546).

universe governed by God, even if their pagan understanding of him was deficient.

Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, however, does not entirely fit this pattern, since it presents neither the punishment of infamy nor the rewarding of virtue. So in the prefatory essay to Winshemius' translation of *Philoctetes* attributed to Melanchthon, other lessons are drawn: the play raises the question "whether for the good of the state treachery and trickery should sometimes be employed, or whether instead open and frank dealings are always called for." Sophocles' play teaches us, Melanchthon concludes, that "three components are needed to succeed in great undertakings: first, a plan and wisdom, secondly, strength and the capacity to execute, and third and most importantly, success and fortune from God." This interpretation thus sees the play's denouement as resulting from a combination of Odysseus' cunning, Neoptolemus' vigor, and divine favor, signified by the arrows of Heracles, without which Troy cannot be taken.²⁶ He focuses not on the plight of the protagonist, but on the factors that contributed to the success of the mission to fetch Philoctetes and conquer Troy, chief among which is divine providence, "for no great matter can be successfully undertaken or accomplished without God as author and accomplice." He supports his statement with quotations from Virgil (*Aeneid* 2. 402) and the Bible (John 3: 27), twin pillars of authority for this humanist and theologian.²⁷

While Melanchthon offered universalized moral lessons for any reader, other editors directed their exegesis of ancient drama to those in power. So, for example, Georgius Ratallerus, who in 1570 published a verse translation of all seven of Sophocles' extant plays, argues in his introduction to *Philoctetes* that adaptability is required in steering the ship of state:

Those who govern the state must frequently pay attention to the prevailing conditions; often things must be feigned or concealed in order to attain peace for the state. Many who are notable for their integrity and the purity of their souls, but who do not have much experience of affairs, do not realize this.²⁸

26 For the relation of Winshemius' translation to Melanchthon's teaching and discussion of the latter's moralizing interpretation of tragedy, see Lurje (2004) 48–52, 96–9 (with annotated bibliography at 454); Daskarolis (2000) 106; Lurie (2012) 443–4.

27 In his *argumentum* ("introduction") to *Philoctetes*, Melanchthon supplements the plot summary with details drawn from Virgil's *Aeneid* (and Servius' commentary on it) and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, evidence that Roman authors also loomed large in his reception of Greek tragedy.

28 Ratallerus (1570) 420.

Neoptolemus offers a “fine example” of those who would rather risk peril than “turn away from the straight course,” in contrast to Odysseus, who had learned through age and experience the value of deceit, should the situation demand it and it benefit the state.²⁹ In the case of Philoctetes, he follows Cicero (*De Finibus* [“On ends”] 5. 11. 32) in presenting him as an example of the natural human impulse to cling to life and shrink from death, even *in extremis*. That Ratallerus presents this resolve as characteristic of every “good and wise man,”³⁰ a qualification not present in Cicero’s exegesis, may reflect Christian doctrine condemning suicide. Thus in the 16th century, Sophocles’ plays served as a mirror for princes. They were seen as offering notable examples, both salutary and cautionary, that were instructive for those in political power. Niccolò Machiavelli’s *Prince*, written in 1513 but published posthumously in 1532, is the most well-known example of a political treatise that drew on exempla from the ancient world. Machiavelli rejected a political theory based on the personal virtue of the ruler as upholder of moral absolutes. For him, a ruler must instead cultivate a flexible disposition capable of responding to the demands of a particular situation, a quality he refers to as *virtù*, redefining the word’s conventional meaning of moral excellence to signify instead “virtuosity” as a leader. This quality is found in the Odysseus of Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* as Ratallerus presents him.

Political interests also infuse *The Adventures of Telemachus, Son of Ulysses* a didactic prose romance by François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, written in 1693–1694 and published anonymously in 1699. Fénelon was a priest who was appointed tutor to the Duke of Burgundy, grandson of Louis XIV. In this work of fiction composed for his young ward, Fénelon describes the travels of Telemachus. The young prince is accompanied by Mentor, who is in fact Minerva/Athena in disguise imparting wisdom to her ward, especially as regards wise government (in fact, Fénelon’s work gave rise to the use of the word “mentor” to describe the advisor of a youth). After visiting Pylos and Sparta, as he does in Homer’s *Odyssey*, Telemachus sets out for Sicily to search for his father. He encounters Philoctetes in Petelia in southern Italy and, through his unassuming modesty and gentleness, overcomes Philoctetes’ prejudice against him on account of his father. Philoctetes narrates to Telemachus his story, which takes up the entirety of book 12, beginning with Heracles’ undoing by “the passion that causes all the most fearful disasters, namely love,” and his own act of friendship towards him in his dying hour. In this account, which follows the tradition found in Servius, Ulysses/Odysseus persuades Philoctetes

29 Ratallerus (1570) 421.

30 Ratallerus (1570) 421.

through his eloquence and empathy to reveal Hercules'/Heracles' burial site, thereby getting him to commit the perjury that resulted in his accidental self-wounding. The account of Philoctetes' exile on Lemnos elaborates on that of Sophocles, presented through the focalization of the betrayed outcast, drawing its descriptive detail directly from the play.³¹ In Fénelon's novel, however, Odysseus' characterization is quite different from that of Sophocles' play. Over the course of his narration, it becomes clear that Philoctetes came to admire Odysseus, describing him as "enlightened" and "industrious" and repeatedly referencing his wisdom. He describes Odysseus weathering his outbursts of anger, "looking at me with an air of compassion, like a man who, far from being angered, tolerates and excuses the trouble of a wretch embittered by misfortune." When his attempts at persuasion fail, Odysseus himself returns the bow to Philoctetes and faces the prospect of death with equanimity until Heracles intervenes. It is Odysseus' demonstration of compassion and generosity that leads to reconciliation and ultimately to Philoctetes' rehabilitation. Fénelon thus develops Telemachus' coming of age narrative as presented in the *Odyssey* into a training in self-mastery and other political and moral traits necessary for successful rule.

The young Telemachus takes in Philoctetes' story with rapt attention, experiencing the emotions of the characters, especially those of Neoptolemus, as if they were his own; "he might have been taken," the narrator adds, "for Neoptolemus himself." "Sometimes he cried out, interrupting Philoctetes involuntarily; at other times he appeared to be absorbed in thought, like a man who thinks deeply about the consequences of actions."³² This brief narrative frame provides a sense not only of the didactic function of this *Bildungsroman* ("Coming of age novel"), but also a clue as to how the reader is prompted to respond to Philoctetes in particular. He serves as an object lesson demonstrating that actions have consequences. Just as Heracles acknowledges to Philoctetes that his suffering is just punishment from the gods for violating his conjugal vows, so Philoctetes recognizes in hindsight that his wounding was a direct consequence of his perjury. His recognition of his responsibility, however, has a positive effect, ultimately resulting in his reconciliation with the gods and his fellow men. Thus his encounter with Telemachus completes the rehabilitation of Philoctetes that his father began. Son, like father, respond

31 Voltaire (*Siècle de Louis XIV* ["Age of Louis XIV"], 32) admired Fénelon's *Télémaque* for its "simple and impassioned truth," noting that it "preserved intact the vigor of Sophocles," as evidenced in "the ferocity of Philoctetes' outbursts."

32 Philoctetes similarly interrupted Neoptolemus' account of his father's death, an interjection understood by Neoptolemus as a welcome indication of his empathy.

to Philoctetes with selfless compassion, evoking in him a reciprocal response that Fénelon as a theologian saw as the human response to God's grace.³³

Philoctetes' grief is also positively construed. As a result of his own experience of great suffering he, like Odysseus, is able to empathize with the misfortunes of others and comfort them. We see this in book 16 of Fénelon's novel, when Diomedes invites Philoctetes to accompany him in comforting Nestor at the loss of his son Pisistratus ("Come and console him: an unfortunate friend is more suited than others to soothe the heart"). So too when in book 9 of Fénelon's novel, Mentor appeals to Nestor, Philoctetes and their allies to make peace with Idomeneus rather than fight by reminding them how much they suffered through the Trojan war and its aftermath, "Philoctetes, more sensitive than others through his experience of misfortunes, could not keep back his tears." Philoctetes and Nestor become surrogate father figures to Telemachus, comforting him when he is disconsolate with remorse after killing Hippias, brother of the Spartan commander Phalanthus, in a dispute over prisoners. Philoctetes is an imperfect character, retaining his irascible streak. But he is loyal to his friends, coming to the rescue of Nestor, and continues to show compassion even on the battlefield. When in book 15 Amphimachus wounds him with a spear-cast, Philoctetes shoots him, then feels pity at the sight of the opponent he has killed in the bloom of youth. The physical wounds of Philoctetes, like the arrows of Heracles ("a source of untold sorrow"), serve as emblems of the destructiveness of war. Philoctetes is forced to retire from the battlefield not only through loss of blood as a result of his new wound, but also because through his exertion in combat "his old wound seemed ready to reopen and renew his suffering."³⁴

The Adventures of Telemachus quickly achieved a widespread readership and was seen as an indictment of the self-absorbed rule of Louis XIV despite Fénelon's protestations to the contrary. Although his association with the mystic Madame de Guyon and the heresy of quietism was the primary cause of his fall from grace, removal from the position of tutor to the dauphin, and banishment from the court, *The Adventures of Telemachus* was certainly a contributing factor. The young Louis, Duke of Burgundy, in pleading on Fénelon's behalf with his grandfather, cited his tutor's positive effect on his own, formerly violent, character as proof of his orthodoxy. Fénelon's work influenced contemporary political thinkers such as Montesquieu, Rousseau and Voltaire

33 For Fénelon's Neoplatonist theology of *pur amour* ("pure love") as well as the influence of quietism on his thinking, see Pagani (2008) 175–236 (198–218 focus in particular on the Philoctetes episode).

34 For discussion of Fénelon's antipathy to war and criticism of Louis XIV's military campaigns, see Bell (2007) 54–68.

as well as Thomas Jefferson. In Rousseau's *Emile* the young title character is given a copy of the work by his wife to be Sophie, who wants a husband like the Telemachus of Fénelon.³⁵

Philoctète was the nom de plume of Antoine Allègre in a secret exchange of letters with the Huguenot dissident Laurent Angliviel de La Beaumelle written in 1753 as prisoners in the Bastille, as well as letters addressed to the geographer Charles Marie de La Condamine.³⁶ Allègre, a tutor from Marseilles, had been imprisoned in 1750 on charges of subversion for fabricating a false report of a conspiracy against Louis xv and his chief mistress, Madame de Pompadour, complete with forged letters, in the hope of winning royal favor. Maintaining his loyalty to the king and his consort throughout, Allègre wrote letters to Madame de Pompadour urging her to intervene on his behalf and pity his suffering, even proposing to use his engineering skills to irrigate her gardens.³⁷ Born into a well-born family that had fallen on hard times, Allègre had been educated by Jesuits and the Fathers of Christian Doctrine, and classical references pepper his letters. Through his self-identification with Philoctetes, a hero who was unjustly treated but eventually recalled by those who banished him after they realized his true value, Allègre claimed for himself a glorious future, a trajectory that was not destined to be fulfilled (Allègre would languish in prison for more than three decades, ending up confined to a cage in the lunatic asylum at Charenton). Ovid, another exile from classical antiquity, serves as Allègre's inspiration in a letter to his friend and former business partner, the abbé Tournel, in which he quotes from Ovid's *Tristia* the following lines (*Tristia* ["Sorrows"] 1. 9. 5–6): "So long as you are fortunate, you will count many friends; but when your circumstances become overcast, you will be alone."³⁸ In this poem addressed to an unnamed loyal friend (and by extension to any sympathetic reader), Ovid praises his friend for remaining loyal *in extremis*; after noting the fickleness of most friends, he commemorates notable mythological examples of steadfast friendship. Through his reference to Ovid's poem, Allègre urges Tournel to emulate these famed loyal friends of antiquity. Certainly Philoctetes' exemplary loyalty towards Heracles in his

35 For Fénelon's work and its influence, see Moore (2009) 29–61; also Schein (2013) 46–7. Editions of the work were illustrated by well-known artists of the 18th century such as Noël-Nicolas Coppel, Pierre-Clément Marillier, and Charles Monnet.

36 For analysis of this epistolary exchange, see Wingrove 2010. Wingrove argues that Allègre and Philoctetes share an overwhelming urge to communicate, and exhibit considerable creativity in order to be recognized through communication. See also Schein (2013) 49–50.

37 For a detailed account of Allègre's life and correspondence set in the context of opposition to Louis xv's rule, see Graham (2000) 104–38.

38 This letter is discussed by Wingrove (2010) 75–6.

moment of distress must also have appealed to Allègre, while their erudition offered a bond he shared with those with whom he corresponded.³⁹

With the turn to Greece of the late 18th century, Philoctetes also began to show up in poetry. The poet and Oxford don Thomas Russell, judged by the poet Robert Southey as the best English writer of sonnets, is perhaps best known for his Sonnet XIII, titled *Suppos'd to have been Written at Lemnos*, published posthumously in 1789:

On this lone Isle, whose rugged rocks affright
 The cautious pilot, ten revolving years
 Great Paeon's Son, unwonted erst to tears,
 Wept o'er his wound: alike each rolling light
 Of heaven he watch'd, and blam'd its lingering flight,
 By day the sea-mew screaming round his cave
 Drove slumber from his eyes, the chiding wave,
 And savage howlings chas'd his dreams by night.
 Hope still was his: in each low breeze, that sigh'd
 Thro' his rude grot, he heard a coming oar,
 In each white cloud a coming sail he spied;
 Nor seldom listen'd to the fancied roar
 Of Oeta's torrents, or the hoarser tide
 That parts fam'd Trachis from th' Euboic shore.

Philoctetes offered a subject well suited to the sensibilities of Romantic poetry, with its interest in nature and penchant for strong emotion. In Sophocles' play the harborless island is inhospitable to sailors (*Philoctetes* 217–8); but for the marooned Philoctetes it provides food and shelter. In the absence of human contact (ll. 170–1, 691–5) he finds company in its wild beasts and wild landscape. The chorus pictures him “listening alone to the waves crashing around him,” (ll. 688–9); and he calls on the headlands, mountain beasts and jagged rocks, his “habitual companions” (ll. 936–7) to bear witness to Neoptolemus' treachery. It is true that this is no Garden of Eden, but rather a hostile landscape in which only the strongest survive; deprived of his bow, he imagines himself as prey for his quarry, and fears the “fierce-eyed” beasts (l. 1147). Nevertheless, there is

39 Allègre's pen (like that of Ovid) got him into trouble with those in power. First the letters he forged in support of his allegations of a conspiracy ended up incriminating him as a liar and landed him in prison; three years later he was punished when the letters he exchanged with La Beaumelle were discovered; another three years later, he was recaptured after a daring prison break when a letter he sent to Madame de Pompadour from Brussels revealed his whereabouts.

a symbiosis to Philoctetes' relationship with his environment, and his closing words are a fond farewell to the island and its landmarks, including his cave "which kept watch with me," (l. 1453). In Russell's poetic reimagining, however, Philoctetes is a solitary figure beaten down by his harsh and uncaring environment. Birds scream, waves rebuke, even the celestial bodies that mark the passage of time seem to drag. Philoctetes must weep alone, with not even Echo to answer his laments (cf. Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 189–91). Yet "Great Paeon's Son" endures ["Paeon" a misspelling or mistranscription of "Poean"], buoyed by hope and the indefatigable human spirit. His tears and resilience alike elevate him and win our sympathy and admiration. Sophocles' play is marked by the ebb and flow of Philoctetes' fortunes, determined primarily through the actions of others in response to his situation. But Russell's poem telescopes ten years into an unending present; its ekphrastic detail draws us into the sensory world of Philoctetes as he strives to keep hope alive and to impose on a cruel and foreign landscape a benevolent and familiar face.

The Romantic poet Samuel Rogers noted the admiration of his friend William Wordsworth for Russell's sonnet;⁴⁰ it may have inspired Wordsworth to compose his own sonnet (*When Philoctetes in the Lemnian Isle*) on the same topic in 1827:

When Philoctetes in the Lemnian isle
 Like a form sculptured on a monument
 Lay couched; on him or his dread bow unbent
 Some wild Bird oft might settle and beguile
 The rigid features of a transient smile,
 Disperse the tear, or to the sigh give vent,
 Slackening the pains of ruthless banishment
 From his loved home, and from heroic toil.
 And trust that spiritual Creatures round us move,
 Grievs to allay which Reason cannot heal;
 Yea, veriest reptiles have sufficed to prove
 To fettered wretchedness, that no Bastile
 Is deep enough to exclude the light of love,
 Though man for brother man has ceased to feel.⁴¹

Wordsworth's poem, like that of Russell, turns away from despondency towards hope, a movement that is presented as a recurring occurrence. Nature responds sympathetically even when "man for brother man has ceased to feel." It amplifies the pathetic fallacy present in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and in Ovid's

40 Dyce and Maltby (1856) 170.

41 Reed (1851) 229.

Metamorphoses; in the latter, "Philoctetes moves the very rocks with his groans," (*Metamorphoses* 13. 48) and is clothed and fed by the birds (*Metamorphoses* 13. 53), as described by Ajax in his speech, in which he seeks to arouse pity for Odysseus' victims. The projection of human emotion onto the natural environment was an important aspect of the Romantic aesthetic, which saw art as a form of creative expression rather than merely a mimetic reflection of reality. Wordsworth himself described poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,"⁴² and describes the poetry of his own work, *The White Doe*, as proceeding "from the soul of Man, communicating its creative energies to the images of the external world."⁴³ But for Wordsworth Nature also had a spiritual dimension; immortal, sentient and suffused with the divine, it is the locus in which man's soul finds its most genuine expression. It is through his encounter with Nature's "spiritual Creatures" that Philoctetes is quickened, comforted, and can fully feel again when Reason proves deficient. Isolation from human contact heightens this experience. We see this most vividly in *The Excursion*, published in 1814, in the description of the Wanderer in his youth:

A Herdsman on the lonely mountain tops,
Such intercourse was his, and in this sort
Was his existence oftentimes 'possessed'...

But in the mountains did he 'feel' his faith.
All things, responsive to the writing, there
Breathed immortality, revolving life,
And greatness still revolving; infinite..."

(Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, 219–21, 226–9)⁴⁴

Thus for the Romantic poets communing with nature inspired their creativity and enhanced their awareness of themselves. Many also spent months and even years in self-imposed 'exile' on the European continent. The longing for his homeland that Philoctetes feels is a common theme of Romantic poetry, tinged often with a sense of rootlessness, of being caught betwixt and between, common to the experience of the expatriate, who now feels like an outsider to his home culture.⁴⁵

42 Preface to his *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth (1800) xxxiii.

43 From a letter by Wordsworth to his friend Archdeacon Wrangham, written in January 1816, in which he defends his poem *The White Doe of Rylstone*, published in 1815; Knight (1907) 68.

44 Reed (1851) 555.

45 For a nuanced study of the role of exile in the poetry and experience of Romantic writers, see Stabler (2013) 4–40, esp. 35–40 for Philoctetes and his bow as a metaphor of

Philoctetes appears in a number of modern works of literature. Most notably, he is a significant character in Derek Walcott's epic poem *Omeros*, which was published in 1990 to great critical acclaim and helped win Walcott the 1992 Nobel Prize for Literature. Philoctete (Philo) is a Caribbean fisherman who carries an open wound from a rusted anchor. Philoctete's physical wound is a symbol of the pain of slavery, and especially the pain of deracination through the Middle Passage, as the narrator indicates:

He [Philoctete] believed the swelling came from the chained ankles
of his grandfathers. Or else why was there no cure?⁴⁶

Philoctete's open wound is emblematic of the festering history of slavery in general:

Negro shacks
moved like a running wound, like the rusty anchor
that scabbed Philoctete's shin . . .⁴⁷

When fellow fisherman Achille loses Helen to Hector, he is compared in his isolation and despondency with Philoctete:

He believed he smelt as badly as Philoctete
from the rotting loneliness that drew every glance
away from him, as stale as a drying fishnet.⁴⁸

Philoctete seeks solace at No Pain Café, the village rum joint run by Ma Kilman, where he would "anoint the mouth of the sore on his shin."⁴⁹ The bar's name,

exile among the English literary set in Italy. Stabler (2013) 38 cites the writer and scholar William Hazlitt's comparison of Robinson Crusoe to Philoctetes in his praise for Daniel Defoe's novel: "Take the speech of the Greek hero on leaving his cave, beautiful as it is, and compare it with the reflections of the English adventurer in his solitary place of confinement. The thoughts of home, and of all from which he is forever cut off, swell and press against his bosom, as the heaving ocean rolls its ceaseless tide against the rocky shore, and the very beatings of his heart become audible in the eternal silence that surrounds him," = Hazlitt (1818) 28.

46 Walcott (1990) 19.

47 Walcott (1990) 19. The poem is written in *terza rima*, an Italian verse form consisting of triplets with an interlocking rhyme scheme.

48 Walcott (1990) 116.

49 Walcott (1990) 8.

and its sign which declares “NO PAIN CAFÉ ALL WELCOME,”⁵⁰ points to the pain that Philoctete seeks to numb there, evoking the analgesic properties of the lotus fruit, of the Sirens, and of Hades, who welcomes all. But it is also the place where the community gathers, sings, and celebrates, and it through Ma Kilman that Philoctete is healed. Obeah woman and sibyl in one, a hybridity reflective of her postcolonial identity, Ma Kilman seeks out in a dark grove a plant whose medicinal properties she learned from her ancestors, following a trail of ants:

She aimed to carry the cure
that proceeds every wound; the reversible Bight
of Benin was her bow, her target the ringed haze

of a circling horizon.⁵¹

The magic plant that cures Philoctete’s wound is described in language evocative of the wound itself, just as his wound is “like a radiant anemone”:⁵²

... its pronged flower

sprang like a buried anchor, its windborne odours
diverted the bee from its pollen...

The mulch it

was rooted in carried the smell, when it gangrened,
of Philoctete’s cut.⁵³

Thus for Walcott the wound contains the germ of its own cure: “I am blest / wif this wound, Ma Kilman,”⁵⁴ Philoctete augurs at the opening of the poem. Ma Kilman muses to herself:

I have a flower somewhere, a medicine, and ways
my grandmother would boil it. I used to watch ants
climbing her white flower-pot. But, God, in which place?”⁵⁵

50 Walcott (1990) 11.

51 Walcott (1990) 239.

52 Walcott (1990) 9.

53 Walcott (1990) 237–8.

54 Walcott (1990) 18.

55 Walcott (1990) 19.

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

The ancient literary record documents several famous representations of Philoctetes that no longer survive. Among the bronze masterpieces of Pythagoras of Rhegium (*floruit* c. 475–450 BC), the Roman author Pliny the Elder (*Naturalis Historia* [“Natural history”] 34. 19. 59), writing in the 1st century AD, describes the sculpture of a “Lame Man” at Syracuse, its realism such that “viewers actually seem to feel the pain of his sore themselves.” So too a 5th-century painting of Philoctetes by Aristophon, brother of Polygnotus, is cited by Plutarch as an example of the pleasure that first-rate artistic representation can bring a viewer, even in depicting ugly subjects (Plutarch, *Moralia* 18c),⁵⁶ while Pausanias (*Description of Greece*, 1. 22. 6) records seeing a painting in the Pinakotheke of the Propylaia, an art gallery on the Acropolis at Athens, depicting Odysseus taking away Philoctetes’ bow on Lemnos alongside one of Diomedes removing the statue of Athena from Troy, the two paintings apparently functioning as pendants depicting famous heists.

The earliest surviving representations of Philoctetes in ancient art are vase paintings of the 5th century BC and predate Sophocles’ play. An Attic red-figure *stamnos* (storage jar) by Hermonax dating to ca. 460 BC and now in the Louvre shows the wounding of Philoctetes at the sanctuary of Chryse. A young and beardless Philoctetes lies prostrate with mouth wide open in a cry of pain. Two attendants gesture in horror as another, perhaps Palamedes, tends to the stricken hero.⁵⁷ A third looks back towards Agamemnon who stands beside the statue of Chryse and strikes the snake at its base on the head with his scepter. An Attic red-figure *calyx-krater* (wine mixing jar) by the Achilles Painter dating to ca. 450 BC in the J. Paul Getty collection shows Athena, wearing her aegis and sporting a snake diadem and pendant earrings, handing a quiver to an armed Philoctetes in left field as Heracles, club in hand, watches from the right.⁵⁸ An Attic red-figure squat *lekythos* (oil flask), painted ca. 420 BC, belongs to the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. It shows Philoctetes seated on a large mound or rock under a leafless tree, evoking the bleak landscape of Lemnos. His right arm supports his weight while he lifts his left bandaged leg onto a tree trunk; his bow and bow case (Greek *gorytos*, an item that could carry bow, quiver and arrows) are propped up

56 See earlier discussion, above, 84.

57 For identification of Palamedes, see Flashar (1999) 147.

58 Brommer (1985) 213–6.

in the foreground as he looks down despondently at his suppurating wound in what is an evocative tableau of introspection and pain. A red figure bell krater in the Syracuse Archaeological Museum from around 380 BC attributed to the Dirce Painter portrays Philoctetes seated within his cave, which the painter has represented as an arch. He has also added many narrative objects: Philoctetes holds his bow in his left hand, while with his right hand he holds a feather with which he fans his wound, a motif that is repeated in other representations. His bow case hangs from the wall of the cave, and a cluster of small birds dangles from its roof. Philoctetes sits on a leopard skin, another visual indication of the importance of his bow in providing for and protecting him. This clustering of props as well as the patterned costume worn by Philoctetes have been taken as representing a theatrical context, though it does not seem to be a performance of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* given the other figures represented, especially Athena, who stands behind the cave, partly concealed by it, and instructs a young man who listens intently; he wears the high lace-up boots frequently depicted in representations of dramatic performance, as well as a *pilos* (rimless conical hat) and short cloak.⁵⁹ On the right stands a bearded man, perhaps Odysseus, with a *pilos* hanging at the nape of his neck. He faces a young woman with ornate belt and jewelry whose identity is not clear, and he is almost completely concealed behind the cave. The effect is perhaps to communicate the subterfuge of the plot. He clutches in his right an object that has been variously identified as a sheathed sword or a quiver.⁶⁰ If the latter, then the artist has used a synchronic technique to point at the expropriation of Philoctetes' arms.

Philoctetes accompanies Heracles on a number of Attic vases. In some he receives the bow and quiver of arrows from Heracles. In others he is part of Heracles' retinue for the sacrifice at the sanctuary of Chryse en route to Troy on the first expedition. So in a red-figure bell krater in the British Museum, dating to c. 430 BC and attributed to the Painter of London, Philoctetes, identified through an inscription (only the crown of his head is preserved), holds a spit of sacrificed meat over an altar of rough boulders across from a young and beardless Lichas, who similarly holds a spit and wears a wreath. To their right is the statue of the goddess Chryse, and Athena looking on; to the far left stands a bearded Heracles, also wearing a wreath. These depictions of the serene and auspicious occasion of Philoctetes' first visit to the sanctuary stand in sharp

59 Simon (1996) 35–6, Taplin (2007) 98–100.

60 Taplin (2007) 99 identifies it as a sword, Flashar (1999) 156 as a quiver.

contrast to those of his ill-fated later return to the site, where he will be bitten by the snake at Chryse's behest.⁶¹

Philoctetes was a common subject represented on gems from Italy dating from the 5th century to around the 1st century BC. The frequency of these Etruscan, Italic and Roman intaglios, engraved in precious stones, especially cornelian and sardonyx, as well as some glass pieces, may indicate the popularity of Philoctetes as a result of the appropriation of his myth to the Italian peninsula.⁶² In some he wears a helmet or *pilos*; he is usually shown nude, sometimes with a *chlamys* (cloak) draped over his arm. In some the snake indicates his wounding; in others, his affliction is signaled with a bandaged foot, a staff on which he is leaning, or his foot raised in discomfort; in some he is fanning his foot with a bird's wing. The most common identifier is his bow, which he often grasps in his hand; often also represented is his quiver of arrows. Such engraved gems were frequently used as seals. Philoctetes constitutes a readily identifiable individual mythical character well suited to representation on a seal.⁶³ Furthermore, Heracles' bow, given to Philoctetes as a token of loyal friendship, offered an appropriate symbol of trustworthiness.

Philoctetes also appears on sculptural reliefs. A marble relief from Attica housed in the Archaeological Museum of Brauron shows Philoctetes lying inside his cave; it is usually dated to the 2nd century BC.⁶⁴ The figure of the hero dominates the tableau. He is semi-recumbent and leans his head on his left arm, which is propped up on two pillows. His beard is long and ill-kempt, and his expression weary and morose as he gazes into the distance. The wall of the cave has been roughly chiseled by the sculptor so as to suggest natural stone; its protruding perimeter adds depth and a sense of enclosure. Two bearded men look into the cave from the outside, their torsos hidden from view by the façade of the cave, thus adding to the sense of subterfuge. The figure at far left wears a conical hat, the *pilos*, and is identifiable as Odysseus. At upper right and above Philoctetes a middle-aged man, most likely Diomedes, grips the edge of the cave with his left hand as he looks toward the ornate bow case hanging from the wall of the cave.

61 For these and other vase-paintings representing Philoctetes sacrificing at the sanctuary of Chryse, see Hooker (1950) 35–41, Simon (1996) 19–20, Flashar (1999) 148, and Bundrick (2014) 683–4.

62 Pipili (1994) lists 27 intaglio representations of Philoctetes. He also features in other Etruscan media, including bronze mirrors and alabaster urns; see Flashar (1999) 160.

63 See Moreno (2008).

64 See Steingraber (2014) 117–9, 125–6.

A pair of Roman silver cups dating to the first century AD found in the grave of a chieftain near Hoby, Denmark, offer a tantalizing example of the possible symbolic resonances of the Philoctetes story. One of the cups depicts two scenes from the hero's life. On one side, a young and beardless Philoctetes sits and raises his left foot for treatment by a seated figure to his left, perhaps the physician Machaon, while an attendant holds a bowl and another figure, perhaps Philoctetes' friend Palamedes, kneels behind the patient and props him up. The snake slivering away at bottom right identifies this as the aftermath of the snakebite at the sanctuary of Chryse; Philoctetes' weapons hang from a tree. On the other side of the cup, a much older Philoctetes, with shaggy beard and hair, sits on a rock and leans heavily on a gnarled stick, his left foot heavily bandaged and his left arm wrapped over his head. To his left a seated visitor, to be identified as Odysseus from his *pilos*, gestures to him with his left hand, while handing Philoctetes' weapons with his right hand to a young attendant, perhaps Diomedes, crouched behind him. Another young man carries a dead crane at far right.⁶⁵ This representation of exploitation presents a strong contrast with the scene of compassionate assistance on the other side of the cup. The other cup also depicts a scene from the Trojan cycle, Priam's embassy to Achilles. Priam kneels before Achilles to beg for the return of the body of his son Hector; the bearded king wearing the Phrygian cap holds the right hand of the beardless Achilles in his as he prepares to kiss it, while with his left he touches Achilles' knee in supplication. Inscriptions on both cups identify the silversmith as Cheirosophos and the owner as Silius, likely to be Gaius Silius Aulus Caecina Largus, the military commander of Upper Germany. If these cups were a gift from the Roman commander to a barbarian chieftain, then the images on the cups may have had particular relevance to the context of the gift, offering positive reinforcement of the benefits of clientage, including clemency and aid towards allies, as well as hinting at the possibility of disarming in response to non-compliance.⁶⁶

Philoctetes probably also features in a Pompeian wall painting from the House of the Centenary, now in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples.⁶⁷ It depicts an older man with thick beard and hair, bare except for a long cloak. His right leg is heavily bandaged, his left bare; with his right hand

65 Müller (2000) 81 identifies him as Actor, the Lemnian who provided for Philoctetes in Euripides' play. See also Simon (1996) 26–7, 31–2, 36.

66 See Dowling (2006) 144–6 for a political analysis of the iconography of the Hoby cups as symbolizing Roman *clementia* ("clemency").

67 See Flashar (1999) 165–7 for discussion of this wall painting. Flashar does not treat the accompanying inscription.

he leans on a walking stick as he limps along. Under his left elbow he carries a bow and bow case. He looks askance. On either side of the wall painting is a graffito, divided into two parts by the lower legs of the figure. To the right, the graffito reads *filius salax quod tu mulierorum difutuisti* ("randy son, how many women have you laid?"), while to the left appear the words *filiu quod tu* ("son, how many have you?").⁶⁸ The graffito raises many questions. Is it intended as a question ("how many women have you laid?" or an exclamation ("how many women you have laid!"))? Is it commenting on the wall painting and therefore directed at the figure of Philoctetes, or is it unrelated? It could, of course, be addressed to someone other than Philoctetes, or even be an auto-referential and perhaps boastful comment on the part of the writer, though the addition of *tu* ("you") makes this latter possibility less likely. Even so, the positioning of the graffito straddling either side of the legs of the figure in the wall painting seems to insert Philoctetes into the meaning of the text. There are a number of features that suggest a literary register, such as the use of *filius* (literally "son") as an affectionate term for a young man,⁶⁹ and words such as *salax* ("randy") and *dif(f)utuere* ("lay"); this register would fit a context in which the author is engaging with a mythological figure. Here, however, the comment seems to be ironic, especially *filius salax* as directed at an old cripple. Indeed, the root meaning of *salax* from *salio* ("jump"), describing a lascivious male eager to mount, is deeply ironic as applied to Philoctetes, who because of his crippled condition and isolation is especially incapacitated from performing the very act for which the author singles him out, a fact underlined by his walking stick, directly adjacent to which the graffito is positioned.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the characterization of Philoctetes as a womanizer may also be ironic as he, perhaps even more than most Greek heroes, belongs to a hyper-masculine world; indeed, Sophocles' *Philoctetes* is a play entirely without female characters. This fascinating interplay of image and text offers us a glimpse into a Roman reception of Philoctetes that is sexually charged, yet one about which we know

68 Mau (1909), 583, *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (=CIL) IV 5213. *Qu(o)d* for *quot* ("how many"): the confusion of -t and -d in final position, especially in monosyllabic words is common, see Adams (2013) 158–3. *Filiu* for *filius*: the omission of the final s is a common feature in Pompeian graffiti, see Väänänen (1966) 80, as is the nominative used instead of vocative: Väänänen (1966) 115. The force of *dif(f)utuo* is to emphasize the extent of the sexual activity. The second, longer inscription probably represents a rewrite of the first after the author decided that there was insufficient space to the left of the figure.

69 Cf. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 4. 12, 9. 27; Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* ["Attic nights"] 13. 20. 5; see Dickey (2007) 126.

70 I owe this and observations on the unusual language of the graffito to Matthew Panciera.

little.⁷¹ It is perhaps not surprising that scholars have tried to explain away the association with Philoctetes as a misidentification.⁷²

Four versions survive of a Renaissance marble sculptural relief dating to the early 16th century depicting a naked Philoctetes; they are located in the Cleveland Museum of Art, Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Museo di Palazzo Ducale in Mantua, and the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. They have hitherto generally been ascribed to the workshop of Antonio Lombardo, but a strong strong case has been made on stylistic grounds for attribution to the Paduan sculptor Giammaria Mosca.⁷³ The reliefs, carved in high relief, depict a naked Philoctetes seated on a gnarly tree stump, supporting the weight of his muscular body with his left hand. Behind him his bow and quiver full of arrows hang from a small tree laden with berries. His right wounded foot is extended in front of him and propped on a low stage in front of a columned portico; he fans it with the wing of a large bird, a motif found in Hellenistic engraved gems; one such gem was acquired by the Venetian Cardinal Domenico Grimani and is likely to have influenced the relief.⁷⁴ The Saint Petersburg relief was owned by Gaspare Fantuzzi, a humanist and avid art collector from Bologna, along with a relief of Eurydice; both were dedicated to his wife Dorotea Castelli. The Latin inscription at the bottom of three of the four surviving Philoctetes reliefs, including the one in Saint Petersburg, reads, "The Poeantian hero suffers from the Lernaean wound." This draws on Servius' version of the myth, in which Philoctetes' wound was caused when he dropped on his foot one of the arrows, given to him by Heracles, dipped in the poisoned blood of the Lernaean hydra, seen as punishment for going back on his oath not to reveal the location of Heracles' burial. Thus the piece has been seen as a cautionary example of perfidy, a pendant to Eurydice's exemplary loyalty towards Orpheus. But the primary influence is likely Ovid, who twice (*Epistulae ex Ponto* ["Letters from Pontus"] 1. 3. 5, *Remedia Amoris* ["Cures for love"] 111; cf. *Ibis* 253) refers to Philoctetes as "the Poeantian hero" in citing him as an example of suffering.

71 See Martial's epigram discussed earlier: above, 87–8.

72 So, for example, Mau (1909) 583 remarks in his editorial comment: *Haud dubio scriptor Philoctetam pro Hercule accepit* ("no doubt the writer took Philoctetes for Hercules").

73 Schulz (1998) 61–8, 239–42.

74 See Schulz (1998) 65–6 and Schein (2013) 46. Although the gem owned by the Grimani family is now lost, a similar engraved sardonyx gem signed by Boethos (2nd c. BC) is catalogued in Pipili (1994) VII.1: 381, entry 34; see also entries 36 and 37. Mandel (1981) 124 notes that the Renaissance reliefs fail to represent the flies buzzing around the open wound, thereby altering the function of Philoctetes' action from one of keeping away flies to one of assuaging the pain.

Philoctetes appears on a medallion in the “Temple of Friendship” in the grounds of Sanssouci, the summer palace of the Prussian king Frederick II (“the Great”). Designed ca. 1768–1770 by Frederick’s chief architect, Carl von Gontard, this circular monopteros-style pavilion was erected in memory of Frederick’s sister Wilhelmine. Its eight Corinthian columns, arranged in pairs, feature medallion portraits of four pairs of friends from classical literature: Pylades and Orestes, Euryalus and Nisus, Heracles and Philoctetes, and Peirithoos and Theseus. The tradition of catalogues of friendships goes back to the ancient world: Bion of Smyrna (fr. 8), for example, lists Theseus and Perithoos, Orestes and Pylades, and Achilles and Patroclus as examples of requited love; later Renaissance humanists wrote extensively on friendship, drawing on philosophical works such as Cicero’s *De Amicitia* (“On Friendship”) and on their own personal experience of friendship. The other three pairs commonly feature in such catalogues, but Heracles and Philoctetes do not. Their inclusion here probably relates to the temple’s function as a memorial to Frederick’s favorite sister Wilhelmine. In a letter to Voltaire dated to 1773, Frederick describes how he goes to the secluded temple “to muse on my many losses and the happiness I once enjoyed.”⁷⁵ One might compare Robert Barnfield’s *Complaint of Poetry for the Death of Liberality* (1598) in which he mourns the death of Edward Leigh (lines 187–92):

If Pythias death, of Damon were bewailed;
Or Pillades did rue, Orestes ende;
If Hercules, for Hylas losse were quailed;
Or Theseus, for Pyrrithous Teares did spend:
Then doe I mourn for Bounty, being dead:
Who living, was my hand, my hart, my head.

Hercules and Philoctetes similarly offer an example of a close friendship prematurely sundered by death. Frederick’s commemoration of his sister Wilhelmine gives her a place of honor within a tradition of friendship that is usually exclusively male and homoerotic; a statue of her, book in hand, occupies the central alcove of the temple, alluding to her erudite interest in the arts; at the same time the presentation of deep friendship in terms of familial relations offers a safe expression of homoerotic friendship.⁷⁶ While Philoctetes, quiver and bow at his back, gazes resolutely across at Heracles, the latter looks

75 It is likely the inspiration of Voltaire’s poem titled *The Temple of Friendship*, in which it is described as “a blest retreat, where courtiers never press,” Smollett (1901) 70.

76 For Philoctetes as passive homoerotic partner, see Martial, *Epigrams* 2. 84. 1.

out at the viewer; his head is tilted, and the mane of the lion head he wears and the sweep of his own locks convey agitation and pathos.

Philoctetes on the Island of Lemnos, a large oil painting by the Irish artist James Barry, painted in 1770 while on tour in Italy and on the occasion of his induction into the Accademia Clementina in Bologna (it is exhibited in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Bologna), offers an interesting example of the ripple effects of an aesthetic debate on the representation of suffering occasioned by the publication in 1766 of Gotthold Lessing's *Laokoon*. In this treatise, the German art critic and philosopher Lessing critiques the claim by his fellow countryman Johann Winckelmann that noble simplicity and quiet grandeur were the defining characteristics of the masterpieces of Greek art.⁷⁷ Indeed, Lessing cites Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, along with the Heracles of his *Women of Trachis*, as an example of a figure who did not bear his suffering with equanimity.⁷⁸ Barry's painting depicts the solitary figure of Philoctetes on the seashore; he is seated on an architectural slab, perhaps a plinth, bearing a fragmentary figural relief in neoclassical mode. With his right hand he supports the weight of his body while with his left he unwraps the bloody bandage on his outstretched wounded leg. He gazes into the distance with an air of solemn contemplation. Barry cites as the sources that inspired the painting both Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and Glaucus of Athens' epigram praising a painting of Philoctetes by Parrhasius for its representation of pathos, from which he quotes the lines "In his parched eyes the deep-sunk tears express / His endless misery, his dire distress," (*Anthologia Palatina* ["Palatine anthology"] 16. 111. 3–4).⁷⁹ A pen and ink grey wash study for the painting, now at the Tate Museum in London, bears an interesting note by the artist at bottom right:

There will appear more agony and the disordered leg will be more distinctly mark'd by having it stretched out in air and without any support from the rock he sits on.

It would seem that conveying the suffering and pain was an aspect of the composition that concerned the artist; the skill of Parrhasius for communicating suffering subtly yet effectively, as celebrated in Glaucus' epigram, seems to have inspired Barry to emulate his Greek predecessor's skills in expressing

77 Crow (2013) 98–100.

78 Barner (1990) 21, 30.

79 See Pressly (1981) 22; Schein (2013) 51–2. Mandel (1981) 135–6 argues that Barry follows Lessing in representing beauty and bravery even amidst suffering.

emotion.⁸⁰ A later aquatint engraving of the same subject produced by Barry in 1777 and now in the British Museum shows a further evolution in the composition: Philoctetes' hair is no longer kept in place by a headband, but is wind-swept, buffeted by the elements like the gnarled and ragged tree that has been added in, which clings precariously to the cliff-face behind him at right. Unlike the oil painting, in which Philoctetes' lips are slightly parted, the figure in the etching has his jaw firmly set in grim determination.

A painting by the Danish artist Nicolai Abilgaard dating to 1775 in the collection of the National Gallery of Denmark titled *The Wounded Philoctetes* offers a striking representation of Philoctetes. The painting depicts Philoctetes as a young and muscular figure. He kneels on his left leg; with his right hand, he clutches his right foot at the metatarsus. His whole body is contorted as he is wracked by pain. With his left hand he draws in his right knee up to his head, while his torso is twisted outward and his right shoulder stretches over and across his flexed right thigh. His face, hunched behind his right shoulder and partially concealed by heavy shadow, is marked by the ravages of pain, his forehead is furrowed, the whites of his eyes bulge out of their sockets, and his open mouth is twisted into an ugly snarl, so that he looks like a cornered feral animal, an association accentuated by the leopard skin on which he leans. His body dominates the canvas, its torsion highlighted through dramatic foreshortening and heavy chiaroscuro. It was painted during Abilgaard's five-year stint in Rome, where his immersion in classical and Renaissance art may have influenced the mythological choice of subject. Indeed, the dynamically twisted and muscular physiognomy may have been inspired by the Belvedere Torso in the Vatican collection, the 1st century BC or AD sculpture that had such a profound influence on Michelangelo among others and that was commonly studied by artists visiting Rome. Abilgaard's painting is a study of the male body in the tradition of Michelangelo, but it is a study in pain and captures something of the savage intensity of Sophocles' Philoctetes. The composition is reminiscent of the works of the Swiss painter Henry Fuseli, with whom Abilgaard struck up a friendship while in Rome, whose paintings are characterized by their emotional energy, dark subject matter, and their depiction of nude figures in strained poses intended to shock the viewer and challenge the balanced repose of neoclassical art.

The contrast with the painting by Jean-Joseph Taillasson produced nine years later could not be more striking. It was originally exhibited in 1784 as Taillasson's reception piece into the Académie Royale. This painting, now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Bordeaux, titled *Ulysses and Neoptolemus Taking the*

80 See below, n. 82, for the influence of Barry's work.

Arrows of Hercules from Philoctetes, shows the moment in which Odysseus and Neoptolemus deprive Philoctetes of his weapons. A bearded Odysseus gesticulates heavenwards to indicate that their mission is divinely sanctioned, while Neoptolemus, sporting a plumed helmet and holding Philoctetes' quiver and bow, points into the distance as he informs Philoctetes that his future lies at Troy. It is a typical exemplar of the neoclassical style favored by the academies and their patrons, with its idealized forms, balanced composition, and elevated and erudite subject matter.⁸¹

Jean-Germain Drouais' 1788 painting, *Philoctetes on the Island of Lemnos*, now in the Musée des Beaux Arts in Chartres, represents Philoctetes as a solitary figure seated on a rock against the backdrop of a rock-face representing the mouth of his cave, on which hang his gilt-tipped bow and large gilded bow case; the bow case's repoussé ornamentation depicts scenes of Heracles' labors. Philoctetes rests his bandaged left foot on his right thigh as he fans his wound with the wing of a large bird, the body of which lies at his feet, transfixed by an arrow.⁸² The features of Philoctetes' face and beard resemble those of ancient busts identified as portraits of Homer, adding a further layer of classical allusion by acknowledging the literary source for the Trojan cycle while also inviting comparison between the blind bard and the wounded outcast.⁸³ Drouais' Philoctetes faces the viewer with a composed expression, his gaze directed upwards to the heavens. Indeed, Philoctetes maintains resolute composure in the face of his horrendous fate, quietly enduring the pain of his wound and the mental anguish of isolation and abandonment. The painting has been seen as a rejoinder to Gotthold Lessing's critique of Winckelmann.⁸⁴ Certainly the calm dignity and stateliness of Drouais' Philoctetes stand in sharp contrast with the

81 The 1782 painting by Ivan Akimovich Akimov titled *Hercules Burning Himself on the Pyre in the Presence of His Friend Philoctetes*, now in the State Tetryakov Gallery in Moscow, fulfilled a similar function, serving as the piece that got the artist elected to the Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg. It shows an idealized representation of the friendship of Hercules and Philoctetes *in extremis*. The young and rosy-cheeked Philoctetes clasps a neatly-coiffed Hercules and holds him in his gaze as the latter points to the billowing torch that his friend holds in his right hand, directing him to kindle the pyre on which he sits. The bow and quiver lie symbolically at the feet of Philoctetes.

82 Drouais seems to have been influenced by Barry's work; his Philoctetes has a similar facial appearance and mien and is similarly positioned at the entrance to his cave; the detail of the dove lying at the hero's feet transfixed by an arrow also seems to borrow from Barry's painting.

83 Crow (2013) 98 makes this observation.

84 Crow (2013) 98–100.

unrestrained anguish and physical contortion of Abilgaard's figure, and they can be seen as divergent responses to a key classical exemplum of suffering.

In 1798 Guillaume Gillon-Lethière, an artist born in the French colony of Guadeloupe and of African descent on his mother's side who enjoyed a distinguished career at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, exhibited at the Salon of Paris a large work now in the Louvre Museum, titled *Philoctetes on the Desert Island of Lemnos, Scaling the Rocks to Get a Bird that he has Killed*. As the title suggests, it depicts Philoctetes struggling to retrieve a bird that he has shot and that now hangs limply from the trunk of a tree growing out of the cliff-face above him. In his left hand he clasps his bow, while with his right he reaches up and grasps a bulwark protruding from the cliff-face, straining to pull himself up. His eyes bulge with the effort; his face is tilted awkwardly towards the viewer, his mouth agape in a grimace of exertion. His injured and bandaged left foot trails behind him and hangs over the ledge of the cliff on which he is positioned into the abyss below. Dark clouds gather above the turbid ocean and his cloak billows out behind him in the gale. Cacti and the rocky landscape further mark his environment as inhospitable, a Darwinian landscape in which only the fittest will survive. The painting emphasizes the precariousness of Philoctetes' existence, and the importance of the bow to his struggle for survival. It also proleptically references the impending deprivation of the bow that is the crux of Sophocles' play: stripped of his bow, Philoctetes laments (*Philoctetes* 952–60), he will fall quarry to the very birds and beasts that previously provided him sustenance. The stormy landscape conveys the turbulent emotions of its solitary human inhabitant.

The Italian painter Baldacci Vincenzo offered an unusual representation of Philoctetes that takes his pathos in an unexpected direction. His *Philoctetes Dying*, completed in the early years of the 19th century and exhibited in the Pinacoteca Comunale of his home town of Cesena, depicts Philoctetes in paroxysms of pain; his head is thrown back in what appear to be death throes; his right hand clutches a rocky ledge in a twisted and vice-like grip, his left is clenched in a fist that screams anguish or rage or both.

A painting now in the Musée Fabre in Montpellier by the French artist in exile in Italy François-Xavier Fabre, dating to 1800 and titled *Ulysses and Neoptolemus Take Heracles' Bow and Arrows from Philoctetes*, presents the tense encounter between Odysseus and Neoptolemus and Philoctetes. Neoptolemus occupies center field. He holds Philoctetes' bow in his right hand and clutches the quiver to his chest. His stance indicates that he is ready to head for the ship. Odysseus, wearing a *pilos*-shaped helmet, grabs him by the right wrist and steers him in its direction. Neoptolemus' gaze, however, is directed back

towards Philoctetes, who stretches out both arms to him as he pleads with him to return his bow. Philoctetes' tattered clothing is a stark contrast to the opulence of the crimson cloak and helmet's crest of Neoptolemus. The wild hair, wide eyes, and tense sinews of the outcast's arms add to the pathos of his abject entreaty. Details of his primitive existence surround him: a dead eagle owl and crudely wrought water jug lie at his feet, while the embers of a camp fire burn in the foreground. Among the details that indicate close attention to Sophocles' play is the representation of the two mouths of the cave (*Philoctetes* 16).

A quite different approach to the representation of Philoctetes was taken in a number of paintings dating to the first half of the 19th century in which Philoctetes is represented as a tiny figure in an expansive landscape. Philoctetes offered a natural choice of subject matter for artists of the Romantic movement, with its predilection for remote and wild landscapes. The French painter Jean Charles Joseph Rémond, famous for his historical landscapes, exhibited a *Historical Landscape Depicting Philoctetes on the Island of Lemnos* at the 1819 Parisian Salon.⁸⁵ The painting is dominated by a landscape of jagged crags towering impossibly into the sky. A warm Mediterranean sun bathes the distant horizon, while in the foreground dense foliage, deep shadows, and frothing waves breaking over dark rocks envelope the solitary figure of Philoctetes. He sits on a rock, naked but for a bright red cloak draped over his right thigh. His bandaged left foot stretches out in front of him, and his gaze is uplifted as his left arm gesticulates to the heavens. The inscription by Rémond reads:

O rugged cliffs, it is to you that I send my complaints; you are accustomed to my groans; I harbor a wound that devours me, and hope lies dead in my heart.⁸⁶

This invocation of his rugged landscape, a variant of Philoctetes' outburst in Sophocles' play ("You harbors, you headlands, you mountain beasts, my companions, you jagged rocks, to you I raise my cry, since you are my habitual companions, and I know none other whom I can address," *Philoctetes* 936–8), personifies his surroundings, a common device of Romanticism, but also emphasizes his isolation. Other landscape paintings depicting Philoctetes from this period include Achille-Etna Michallon's 1822 *Landscape with Philoctetes on the Island of Lemnos*, in the Musée Fabre in Montpellier, and an undated

85 The painting, whose description and location Mandel (1981) 142 cites as unknown, was sold on March 18, 2005 by the Parisian auction house Tajan (lot 170).

86 The quotation is recorded by Mandel (1981) 142.

painting attributed to the French artist Antoine-Felix Boisselier (1790–1857); in the foreground the latter shows Philoctetes in a dark and rugged landscape fanning his wound, while in the distance a ship braves a turbulent sea.⁸⁷ Decoding the painting and recognizing these details required familiarity both with the myth and the artistic tradition.

Perhaps the most arresting of all representations of Philoctetes is a painting by David Scott dating to 1839–1840 now in the National Museum of Scotland. Scott was a Scottish painter whose work anticipated the Pre-Raphaelite movement, in which his brother William Bell Scott was to play a significant role. David Scott was drawn to dark subject matters, including scenes of death and psychological turmoil; a number of his paintings also show a mystical interest in the supernatural, in the tradition of William Blake. His *Philoctetes Left on the Isle of Lemnos by the Greeks on their Passage Towards Troy* depicts Philoctetes splayed across a jagged rock jutting out into the dark and stormy ocean. The palette and lighting is Caravaggesque, the subject bathed in an eerie golden light against an inky backdrop. At left the Greek flotilla of ships is visible as tiny dots silhouetted against the horizon, emphasizing the desertion of Philoctetes. His bow and quiver lie beside him, hanging precariously over the rock's edge into the sea. Philoctetes' supine posture, his head tilted back and his ribcage prominently protruding as he arches his back, accentuates his physical agony and mental anguish, and his arms and legs are splayed, forming a cruciform shape; he is naked except for the mantle that drapes across his loins. The composition is perhaps intended to call to mind Christ's passion; indeed, Scott painted an altarpiece representing the descent from the cross for the Roman Catholic chapel of St Patrick's in Edinburgh just four years earlier, a product of his two-year study tour in Italy where he would have seen many such works. By evoking the typology of Christ's passion, Scott draws attention to Philoctetes' anguish and abandonment by his companions in his hour of need and imbues the scene with a cosmic symbolism discernible in other of his works.

Philoctetes also appears among the oeuvres of a number of 19th century sculptors. A prominent example is the plaster relief by Swiss-born Jean-Jacques (James) Pradier titled *Neoptolemus Stops Philoctetes from Killing Ulysses*, now in the collection of the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, with which he won the 1813 Prix de Rome. It presents the critical moment in Sophocles' play in which Neoptolemus intervenes as Philoctetes is about to shoot Odysseus. The sculptor shows Neoptolemus, his cloak flaring behind him as he flings himself at the muscular and satyr-like figure of Philoctetes and clutches his clenched fist seeking to stave off his act of violence. Philoctetes'

87 The painting appears in the catalog of Tajan for June 18, 2007.

brow is furrowed in anger and his mouth is twisted into a scowl; Odysseus looks calmly on from behind Neoptolemus, standing aloof from the action. Neoptolemus' right arm raised to his brow conveys his anxiety and conflicting emotions.⁸⁸ More common, however, are free-standing sculptures featuring Philoctetes alone, either standing or seated. *Wounded Philoctetes*, a statue by the Danish sculptor Hermann Wilhelm Bissen, who worked in the studio of the famous neoclassical sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen in Rome, dates to 1854–1855 and is in the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen. It portrays a pained Philoctetes leaning on his staff, while with his left hand he clutches the strap of his quiver. This was one of a number of sculptures in which Bissen sought to communicate the mental or physical anguish of a classical hero, including his *Orestes Fleeing the Furies* (1850–1) and *Achilles in Anger* (1861), both also in the Glyptotek collection.

The most famous postclassical sculpture of Philoctetes is the 1886 work in plaster by the German neoclassical sculptor Adolf von Hildebrand in the Neue Pinakothek in Munich. Like Bissen he spent much time in Italy. Resisting the contemporary move towards realism, von Hildebrand represents Philoctetes as a young man with idealized physique and facial features. Von Hildebrand would go on to publish in 1893 a highly influential essay, titled *Das Problem der Form in der bildenen Kunst* ("The problem of form in the fine arts"). For von Hildebrand, it is the architectonic structure of sculpture that communicates to the viewer. Philoctetes rests his wounded left foot on the large slab of rock on which he is seated; his left thigh and shin form a triangle with the rock face; his left arm reaches down to cradle his wounded foot, another element of the composition that draws attention to his stricken condition. His torso and head turn in the opposite direction as he looks soulfully over his right shoulder off into the distance. His right leg and bow form a diagonal to the horizontal rock face and vertically planted right arm on which he supports himself. His *Philoktet* ("Philoctetes") is a carefully balanced study in unified composition, reflecting its creator's interest in form. Philoctetes thus serves as an interesting case study of the various ways in which pathos is represented in the visual arts.

Music

In Vienna in March of 1817, composer Franz Schubert set to music the poem by Johann Mayrhofer titled *Philoktet* ("Philoctetes"). Both composer and poet lived and collaborated in an artistic world under the influence of neoclassicism.⁸⁹ The two artists were friends, and worked closely together over a number of

88 Schwartz (2005) 157–66.

89 Ebright (2006) 4–7.

years. At one time, they aspired to create an *opera seria* (“serious opera”) with a classical theme. This song, “Da sitz ich ohne Bogen” (“Here I sit without my bow”),⁹⁰ was meant eventually to be a part of this project. Unfortunately, the opera was never finished.⁹¹ The song was published posthumously in 1830 in a collection titled *Lieder aus dem Nachlass* (“Posthumous songs”).⁹²

As the poem begins, Philoctetes is to be found lamenting that his bow has been stolen by Ulysses. Mayrhofer paints a picture of Philoctetes sitting alone and desolate on Lemnos. He is “staring into the sand” and ruminating bitterly upon his loss. The wildlife rustles around him, mocking him in his helplessness:

Da sitz ich ohne Bogen und starre in den Sand.
 Was tat ich dir Ulysses, daß du sie mir entwandt?
 Die Waffe, die den Trojern des Todes Bote war,
 Die auf der wüsten Insel mir Unterhalt gebar.
 Es rauschen Vogelschwärme mir über'm greisen Haupt;
 Ich greife nach dem Bogen, umsonst, er ist geraubt!
 Aus dichtem Busche raschelt der braune Hirsch hervor:
 Ich strecke leere Arme zur Nemesis empor.
 Du schlauer König, scheue der Göttin Rächerblick!
 Erbarme dich und stelle den Bogen mir zurück.

Here I sit without my bow and stare into the sand.
 What did I do to you, Ulysses, that you stole it from me?
 The weapon that for the Trojans was the harbinger of death,
 That on this barren island provided me sustenance.
 Flocks of birds swoop over my old grey head;
 I reach for the bow—in vain, for it is stolen!
 From the dense undergrowth a brown stag bursts forth;
 I stretch empty arms aloft to Nemesis.
 You cunning king, beware of the avenging gaze of the goddess!
 Take pity and return to me my bow.

90 Schubert songs are usually referred to by their opening lines, but the song is also sometimes referred to by the title *Philoktet* (“Philoctetes”).

91 Ebright (2006) 43, Reed (1997) 356. It has been observed that, had the piece been part of an opera, it would have possessed a greater sense of context and completeness, something it somewhat lacks as a stand-alone piece.

92 Reed (1997) 506.

The text reflects the brokenness of Philoctetes' body and spirit in its uneven lines.⁹³ This awkwardness increases the sense of the pitiful condition in which Philoctetes has been left. It is both a rhythmic illustration of his crippling wound and a depiction of his state of mind caused by Ulysses' deceit.

Schubert's setting is also filled with angst and despair. The introduction doesn't initially establish the key. Instead, the song begins with an unsettling introductory motif outside of the tonal center, which grudgingly returns to the original key of b minor, setting the stage for the coming scene.⁹⁴ The rhythmic grouping of the introduction is uneven, which, like the meter of the poem, accents Philoctetes' mood and illustrates his painful limp. The persistent staccatos speak to the building tension. The vocal line bursts in on the relatively large interval of an ascending perfect fourth, indicative of a bitter, passionate outburst of emotion. The effect of this clearly delineated line is harsh, and piercing to the ear after the chaotic effects of the turmoil caused by the introduction. The piano accompaniment under the vocal line is relatively sparse, accentuating and reinforcing the moods displayed in the introduction and the vocal line.

In measure 32, the piece modulates from b minor to e flat minor. This was a key often utilized by Schubert to create a sense of awe and myth.⁹⁵ The passage that begins here is darker and more reflective of his internal conflict. The quiet flowing eighth notes and octave quarter notes in the low register of the piano accompaniment create a brooding, almost mysterious atmosphere as they illustrate the birds flying overhead and the deer rustling in the bushes that briefly come to Philoctetes' attention. The presence of wildlife further torments him as he reaches instinctively for his bow to hunt these creatures, only to find that it is no longer at his side. The frustration builds until the key returns to the brighter and more outwardly agitated mood of the original key as he verbally lashes out at Ulysses. The form of this song is atypical of Schubert's settings of Mayrhofer's poems. They are usually set in a major key, or begin in a minor key and end in a major key, a method of composition that lends itself to the layered complexity of the "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" of classical

93 Ebright (2006) 44: "Although the *aabb* rhyming of the first two stanzas is clear, the poem lacks an internal fluidity and grace. The lines are made up of two trimeters separated by a caesura, with the first trimeter penned iambically and the second inverted into a trochaic meter. Even the final couplet, in which Philoctetes makes his most impassioned cry for revenge, is awkward, with Mayrhofer's rhyming of 'blick' and 'zurück.'"

94 Reed (1997) 492 notes that B minor is a key used by Schubert to create a sense of "... suffering, loneliness, alienation and derangement..." Because of this, the song doesn't provide the same sense of comfort that often comes when returning to a home key.

95 See Reed (1997) 490, a key used by Schubert to evoke the awe of the sea and the grave.

figures and allows for a specific development of character.⁹⁶ That “Da sitz ich ohne Bogen” begins and ends in a minor key is indicative of unreserved suffering and stagnation of character. Philoctetes is left in much the same state at the end of the song as when it began.

Schubert and Mayrhofer created a much more solitary representation of this scene than the coinciding scene in Sophocles’ play. Philoctetes is the speaker in the poem, and, although he refers to Ulysses as “you”, the sense of isolation created by both words and music indicates that he is lamenting to himself. The resulting piece is reflective not only of the disposition of the character, but the dispositions of the creators. Mayrhofer shared the classical stoic ideal of objective thinking and portrayals, but was rarely able to achieve his aspirations. A depressed hypochondriac, he often included parts of his own character in the “character sketch” poems that Schubert set to music.⁹⁷ Mayrhofer inspired in Schubert and his work a sense of *Sehnsucht*, or “longing,” which Schubert attempted to incorporate into his compositions. The song imagines a scene in which Philoctetes is alone in his desolation. The accusatory rage that is seen most easily in Sophocles’ play as Philoctetes confronts his enemies is not the artistic focus here. Instead, Schubert and Mayrhofer chose to focus on the isolated despair and bitter hopelessness that is the root cause of his violent, passionate reaction in the play.

Dance

The only self-standing dance piece inspired by Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* of which I am aware is *Philoktetet*, directed by the Hungarian-born choreographer and director Kristóf Szabó and premiered in November 2012 at Barnes Crossing Freiraum für TanzPerformanceKunst, a performing arts center in Cologne, Germany. It is one of a number of works by Szabó that draw on ancient stories.⁹⁸ For Szabó the dominant mythical tradition presenting Philoctetes as a war hero who is cured by the will of the gods through returning to battle and saving his country is propaganda and a lie. Szabó presents an alternative reality. His piece engages on a psychological level with the trauma of war as it affects combatants. Program notes describe Philoctetes as a war hero “plagued by ghastly

96 Ebright (2006) 32. Schubert and Mayrhofer partnered on other classically themed Lieder—*Iphigenia*, *Orest auf Tauris* [“Orestes in Tauris”], and *Fahrt zum Hades* [“Journey to Hades”] among others—that are more representative of the neoclassical ideal of noble “simplicity and quiet grandeur.”

97 Ebright (2006) 23.

98 He has also directed a *Mucius Scaevola* and a *Sisyphos*, and will put on an *Antigone* in November 2016.

visions” and the piece as “the battle of the heroic man against the female elements of his psyche.”⁹⁹ Szabó’s piece combines dance, movement theater, poetry, voice-art and video-art. It incorporates excerpts from a poem by Szabó titled *Verreifter Garten Bauch Liebster Atem* (“Overripe Garden Belly Dearest Breath”). It is choreographed for a male dancer representing Philoctetes and a female dancer representing Psyche, his soul. The tortured relationship between the warrior and Psyche, the externalized visualization of his thoughts, memories, and feelings, is accentuated by choreography, voice art and set design, and stage props that include a bloodied axe, window frame, rope, net, hospital bed, and bath tub. Although the costuming and set of the piece are timeless, contemporary concerns inform the piece, whose trailer features aerial bombing seen through the cross hairs of a gun sight.

The piece is intended as a critique of modern policies and attitudes to war, including the “democratization of megalomania through cinema, video games, and the internet, through which now everyone wants to be Alexander the Great.”¹⁰⁰ However, at its core it is an exploration of compassion, an interest arising from Szabó’s longstanding engagement with Buddhist schools of thought. Through killing Philoctetes has lost the capacity for compassion, becoming instead the perfect Man-Machine or super-hero. He has killed off the feminine in himself and now despises women and the feminine element in despair. He must relearn how to mourn and embrace the mother/feminine element of his Psyche; the death of the old self makes possible the rehabilitation of his soul. Philoctetes rediscovers the world, gaining a heightened awareness of his surroundings; he learns the wisdom of living with open heart.

On Stage and Screen

Stage

Although it was being read and interpreted in the 16th century by Melanchthon and others, Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* was rarely staged before the 19th century, and dramatic adaptations of the play were also few and far between.¹⁰¹ A version of the play by the Sicilian Jesuit Ortensio Scammacca, who was celebrated by his contemporaries as “the new Sophocles,” was published in 1641 under

99 <https://philoktet2012.wordpress.com/>; see also <http://www.tanzwebkoeln.de/?p=3733>.

100 Szabó, reflections shared through private correspondence, July 28, 2016.

101 Brief discussions of various translations, adaptations and performances can be found in Hartigan (1995); Hall/Macintosh (2005); Roisman (2005); Walton (2006); Schein (2013); Foley (2014).

the title *Il Filottete, tragedia morale* ("Philoctetes, moral tragedy"). Scammacca, who taught at Jesuit colleges throughout Sicily, composed a total of 18 adaptations of plays of Sophocles and Euripides; these moral tragedies were intended to provide instruction for character formation. Pagan gods were replaced by divine providence. Scammacca embraced Aristotelian ideals of unities of time and place, and constructed clear and simple plots.¹⁰² But there is no evidence that his plays were staged.

Voltaire's first play, *Oedipe*, first performed in 1718, features Philoctetes (Philoctète) as a character.¹⁰³ The play's opening lines, spoken by Philoctetes' friend Dimas, draw attention to the inconcinnity of Philoctetes' presence in Thebes:

Is it you, Philoctetes? Can I believe my eyes? Which implacable god brings you to these parts? You in Thebes, sir! What have you come here to do?

Dimas goes on to warn Philoctetes that "devouring death lives among us." "This residence suits the ill-fated," replies Philoctetes. A Thebes wracked by plague and death is for him a fitting place! Philoctetes is a character whose virtue remains a constant throughout his involvement in the first three of its five acts. He has put duty over personal interest in leaving Thebes in self-imposed exile when king Laius married Jocasta, with whom Philoctetes was in love. Upon learning on his return at the beginning of the play that Laius is dead and Jocasta is still alive, Philoctetes exclaims: "What seductive hope is awakening in my heart! What, Jocasta! Are the gods being more kind to me? What, can Philoctetes now be yours?" His hope is short-lived, however, as Dimas relates how Oedipus, another new arrival, defeated the Sphinx and married the queen. Time and again, we witness Philoctetes' self-control in action, as once again he suppresses his emotions and declares that Oedipus is "worthy of such a reward." His virtue is further tested in Act 2 when the Theban people accuse him of being the murderer of Laius. Thus Philoctetes serves as a foil for Oedipus, and as a new and surprising vehicle for dramatic irony in this well-known myth. Philoctetes declares to Oedipus his intention to stay and stand trial, despite Jocasta's pleas that he flee and save himself. Act 3 grows to a crescendo when the high priest arrives, and both Philoctetes and Oedipus coax him to identify the murderer of Laius despite his reluctance to do so. The chorus, convinced that he will name Philoctetes, urge him to "Say one word, he dies,

¹⁰² Bancheri (1985).

¹⁰³ For a more comprehensive analysis of this play, see below, 194–200.

and you save us all." When the priest indicts Oedipus, Philoctetes remains loyal to the king: "I believe you innocent despite the voice of the gods," he declares, and in so doing reveals his virtue as well as his ignorance. And with the close of the third act, Philoctetes disappears, once again becoming notable for his absence. Even in the climactic fifth act, when Oedipus' double infamy through parricide and incest is recognized, there is no mention of Philoctetes' exoneration from the suspicion of regicide.

The French aristocrat Jean-Baptiste Vivien de Chateaubrun wrote a drama in rhyming couplets, titled *Philoctète* ("Philoctetes") and based on Sophocles' play, which was performed at the Comédie Française in 1755 and dedicated to Louis, Prince of Orléans.¹⁰⁴ In Chateaubrun's version, Philoctète is accompanied on Lemnos by his daughter Sophie. The dutiful Sophie, accompanied by her governess Palmire, set out in search of her father, only to be shipwrecked on the very island of Lemnos where he was marooned. Pirrhus (Neoptolemus), searching for Philoctète, can scarce believe his good fortune when he encounters the young Sophie instead: "But if my eyes don't deceive, / this island is presently the home of the gods," ("Mais si j'en crois mes yeux / Cette isle en ce moment est le séjour des Dieux").¹⁰⁵ Pirrhus is smitten by Sophie's beauty and innocence, and moved by her description of her father's plight. Chateaubrun's characters self-consciously engage with and depart from Sophocles' text, as when Pirrhus confesses to his companion Démas "feelings of pity, / Or perhaps a fondness for tender love."¹⁰⁶ Passion triumphs over reason in Pirrhus; pity towards Philoctète now becomes a secondary reason for his change of heart, though it is the reason that Pirrhus highlights. Ulisse (Odysseus) declares Pirrhus' love a crime because it violates his duty to country and friends. Pirrhus must now choose between the competing claims of honor and pity, championed by Sophie, and glory and friendship, advocated by Ulisse. "Oh heavens, what are you going to do?" asks Ulisse. Pirrhus dithers: "I'm going to . . . (To Sophie) What, you're crying? Let's run to your father!"¹⁰⁷ Thus the insertion of the romantic sub-plot, typical of adaptations of Greek tragedy in this time-period, adds a light and at times humorous sensibility. Sophie's presence also heightens the moments of greatest melodrama. When Philoctète decides to die rather than face the prospect of a dishonorable life, he hands Sophie a dagger and bids her show her filial duty by ending his life, as Hyllus did for

104 See Mandel (1981) 130–2. For a detailed study of Chateaubrun's play and its relation to its Sophoclean antecedent, see Donnet (2004).

105 Chateaubrun (1756) 12.

106 Chateaubrun (1756) 15.

107 Chateaubrun (1756) 34–5.

Hercules. She demurs. It is Sophie who also provides the impetus for the play's denouement. Convinced of the sincerity of Pirrhos' love for his daughter and softened by Ulisse's overtures, Philoctète yields and agrees to sail to Troy, for Sophie's sake; thus reciprocal familial affection replaces the claims of Heracles' friendship that brought about resolution in Sophocles' play.

Chateaubrun's play inspired a parody, performed in the same year and published anonymously, attributed variously to Jean Antonine Romagnesi, and to Antoine-François Riccoboni with collaboration from Charles-Simon Favart.¹⁰⁸ Titled *La Rancune* ("The Rancour") after its homonymous protagonist, it offers a fast-moving comic takeoff, also written in rhyming couplets, set on an island in the Rhône. Rodomont (Pirrhos), accompanied by Coulisse (Ulisse) and Thomas, seeks La Rancune (Philoctète), and is delighted to encounter his daughter Julie (Sophie). She recounts how she set out with her servant-woman to find her father, when a terrible storm struck, sending all those in the ship plunging "head over buttocks to swallow the swell and quaff death at the bottom of the river." "Did you drown?" inquires Thomas! "No sir," Julie replies. Rodomont marvels that a young girl survived when experienced sailors drowned. "Sir, I have the talent of being a good swimmer," she replies. When Thomas expresses his condolence on learning that her maid didn't survive, Julie cheerfully replies "That maid didn't do anything for me. Don't worry about her!" The parody indulges in much thespian humor and jokes at the expense of contemporary actors (La Rancune is an actor sabotaged by his fellow cast members) as well as poking fun at the hackneyed tropes and melodrama of Chateaubrun's play.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing also responded critically to Chateaubrun's play. In his *Laokoon*, he praised the masterful way in which Sophocles elicits our pity for his protagonist by representing him as a sick man abandoned by his friends, consigned to a miserable existence of pain and hunger, made worse still by his isolation. Philoctetes' helplessness further heightens our pity when he is deprived of his bow, his own means of sustenance: "there is no pity," Lessing adds, "that is stronger, none that more fully melts one's very soul, than one that combines with the representation of despair."¹⁰⁹ He then launches into an impassioned critique of Chateaubrun:

108 For evidence in favor of the attribution to Riccoboni, with interventions by Favart, see Donnet (2003), which also includes a critical edition of the play. See also Donnet (2004) 358–81.

109 Lessing (1766) 35.

O the folly of the Frenchman, who did not have the understanding to ponder this, or heart to feel it! Or, if he did, then only in small measure, that he sacrificed it for the miserable tastes of his country. Chataubrun [sic] gives Philoctetes company. He allows his princess daughter to come to him on the desert island. And even she is not alone, but has a lady-in-waiting, something that I am not sure whether the princess or the playwright had greater need for!

An influential response to Sophocles' *Philoctetes* is the short play in five acts by André Gide titled *Philoctète: ou Le Traité Des Trois Morales* ("Philoctetes: or the treatise on three ethics"). Gide had begun work on it already in 1893, when he cited as its subtitle *L'immonde Blessure* ("The unwholesome wound"); it was first published in the journal *Revue Blanche* in December 1898, then printed in book form the following year along with three other treatises. Gide himself noted that it was a treatise that bore no pretensions to be a work for the stage, and it was not performed until 1937, when Jacques Copeau directed a production at the Théâtre du Vieux Colombier in Paris. It takes as its focus the competing claims of the three main characters in Sophocles' play, and uses them to examine competing conceptions of virtue. Gide, taking his cue from Oscar Wilde, who moved in the same literary circles in France, saw classical mythology as a source of universal truths, which he expressed in a symbolist register. In this play, he strips down Sophocles' plot, including only the three main characters in his *dramatis personae*. For his Ulysses, devotion to country is the ultimate virtue, and he steers his protégé towards this viewpoint through Socratic questioning:

Child, listen and answer me: are you not the friend of all the Greeks rather than the friend of a single one? Or, rather, isn't our country greater than one man? And could you bear to save one man if, to save him, Greece must be lost?¹¹⁰

Philoctetes in his exchanges with Neoptolemus, by contrast, allows his interlocutor to come to his own conclusion that virtue lies in devotion to other; Neoptolemus responds to this realization by handing over to Philoctetes a phial containing a potion with which they intended to drug him; thus affection rather than pity is what motivates his change of heart.¹¹¹ Philoctetes surprises Ulysses and Neoptolemus by voluntarily drinking the potion; he sees

110 In Mandel (1981) 166, translation by Jackson Mathews.

111 Roisman (2005) 114.

his independence as a source of strength and a way in which he can exercise supremacy even in his weakness:

And you shall admire me, Ulysses; I want to compel you to admire me. My virtue rises above yours and you feel yourself diminished.¹¹²

For Philoctetes, his isolation has allowed him to relinquish all desire to gain advantage from others, allowing him instead to desire virtue itself and to understand the secrets of life. The closing act presents Philoctetes watching the ship sailing off into the distance, taking with it his bow. He says to himself, calmly and quietly, "They will never come back; they have no more bows to seek . . . I am happy."¹¹³ The stage directions describe the sun "rising in a perfectly clear sky." Philoctetes' "voice has become extraordinarily mild and beautiful; around him flowers are showing through the snow, and birds from heaven come down to feed him." Unlike Sophocles' Philoctetes, who is reintegrated into society through the intervention of his trusted friend Heracles, Gide's protagonist retreats back into individualism and isolation, finding his peace in a primal existence free from the complications of living within human society with its manipulations and strictures. The play is anarchic in challenging the claims of social contract theory and the authority and primacy of the gods and the state.

Gide's play also explores the theme of creative expression. Especially his Philoctetes ruminates on the creative process. For Philoctetes, it is in the silence of isolation that the beauty of expression becomes most palpable, while at the same time his poetry is moribund because it lacks an audience. This aspect of Gide's play is further explored by the author and literary critic Edmund Wilson in his essay titled "Philoctetes: The Wound and the Bow," which comprises the seventh and final chapter of his homonymous book.¹¹⁴ In the preceding six chapters, Wilson examines the creative genius of Charles Dickens, Rudyard Kipling, Jacques Casanova, Edith Wharton, Ernest Hemmingway, and James Joyce, then makes explicit in his study of the figure of Philoctetes the common thread that he sees in the work of these authors, that "genius and disease, like strength and mutilation, may be inextricably bound together." This conclusion he reaches through his analysis of André Gide's *Philoctète* in particular. For Wilson, "[t]he Philoctetes of Gide is, in fact, a literary man: at once a moralist and an artist, whose genius becomes purer and deeper in ratio to his isolation

¹¹² Mandel (1981) 177.

¹¹³ Mandel (1981) 178.

¹¹⁴ Wilson (1941) 272–95.

and outlawry,” and he ties this representation of Philoctetes to Gide’s own psychological disorders, and isolation as someone who “stood at an angle to the morality of society.”¹¹⁵ As an author and a literary critic, Wilson identifies both with Philoctetes as creative artist and with Neoptolemus, who appreciates the true worth of a misunderstood genius.

A darker reworking of Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* is the play *Philoktet* by Heiner Müller, written from 1958 to 1964 and first published in 1965.¹¹⁶ Müller was a prodigious playwright writing in the German Democratic Republic during the Cold War. His was a tortured relationship with the communist authorities, who struggled to discern the intent of his often complex and allusive plays. In 1961, he was disbarred from the writers’ union after his play, *Die Umsiedlerin* (“The Resettled Woman”), was seen as an indictment of the Berlin Wall, though his credentials as a Marxist playwright in the tradition of Bertolt Brecht and his pedigree (his father had been a political prisoner for his opposition to Nazism) meant that his plays were often seen as a critique of capitalism and of the communist system by East German and West German critics respectively. Like others writing in the German Democratic Republic, Müller drew on classical drama as a vehicle by which to explore political themes.¹¹⁷ His *Philoktet*, first published in the East German journal *Sinn und Form* (“Sense and form”), received its premiere in West Germany in 1968 at the Residenz Theater in Munich, directed by Hans Lietzau, who went on to direct three later productions of the play.¹¹⁸ Reviewers were startled by what they saw. One wrote:

In the three-man play *Philoktet* by GDR playwright Heiner Müller, the gods are dead, the Greeks are treacherous, and the world is a slaughterhouse... Müller, who alongside Hacks is the most significant GDR playwright, tends rather to be ignored than performed in his country. *Philoktet*, a play which, in coded and multivalent language, deals with ideology, power, lies and brutality, is now receiving its premiere in the Munich Residenztheater.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Quotations from Wilson (1941) 289.

¹¹⁶ A most thorough and useful analysis of Müller’s play is Weber (2015) 275–309; it discusses Müller’s own pronouncements on the play, which shifted over time, as well as differing critical interpretations of it, some of which saw its primary ambit as political, others as existential. See also Roisman (2005) 117–19, Flashar (2009) 235–37, Schein (2013) 54–55.

¹¹⁷ Riedel (1994) offers a useful study of the reception of classical figures in the literature of the German Democratic Republic.

¹¹⁸ Mandel (1981) 217–8.

¹¹⁹ *Der Spiegel* 30: 95, published July 22, 1968; author not indicated.

Müller's play begins with a prologue delivered by the actor cast as Philoctetes:

Dear audience, the play we are about to show
 Will waft you from today to long ago
 When man was foe to man, when life was tough,
 And every month another bloody war came off.
 Our spectacle is grim—let me be plain—
 It lacks a Message to take home and frame.
 Or useful lesson for a cloudy day.
 If you're alarmed—the exit lies that way.¹²⁰

The metatheatrical prologue offers a light-hearted framing device in the tradition of Plautus' comedies, but the generic hybridity and use of a masked clown serve to problematize its message.¹²¹ It is hard to take at face value the claim to be leaving behind the present for a distant and entirely distinct past despite the distancing effect of the prologue. So too the contention that the play offers nothing useful lessons for life, a claim that strikes at the very heart of Greek tragedy's identity as a didactic genre, seems disingenuous. Müller had to tread carefully, and his edited manuscript shows the excision from the prologue of a couplet that read: "When two fight, a third dies / As between left and right there's a hole in the middle."¹²² It is understandable that he decided against including these verses, whose imagery of "left" and "right" in conflict could be read as applying to contemporary politics.

Müller's play presents a trio of characters who respond variously to constraint, a loss of autonomy that is repeatedly described using the Oresteian imagery of the net. Neoptolemus struggles to distance himself from the mission, but reluctantly gives in:

120 Mandel (1981) 223, translation of Müller's *Philoctet* by Mandel, in collaboration with Maria Kelsen Feder. The translation by Mandel is loose, but renders the *Knittelvers* (a German verse form of four lines rhymed as couplets) rhyme and general sense of Müller's prologue. I present below my own literal translation by way of comparison: "Ladies and Gentlemen, from the present day / Our play takes us back into the past / Back when man was mortal foe to man, / When slaughter was routine and life itself dangerous. / And so as to be frank from the start: / What we present here has no moral. / There's nothing you can learn from us for life. / If that doesn't suit, feel free to leave. / There is nothing to laugh about / In the business we are about to conduct together."

121 Weber (2015) 289–91.

122 Müller (1995) 649, my translation.

... walking
 In a net of shame down to the seashore
 To bring tidings of my conquering lie,
 Delivering my shameful catch, red-faced ...¹²³

He describes himself as “a dupe” who “reluctantly ... duped the victim of too many lies.”¹²⁴

Carrying out his duty against his will, his moment of triumph is at once his moment of ignominy; the conqueror is at once the lackey, a paradox that expresses an inherent reality of the totalitarian state, in which no one is truly free. This Philoctetes declaims in an extended tirade:

Conqueror, is it shame that makes you blush?
 Why shame? Cleverly the net was woven:
 The best I ever saw. Decoy, you toiled
 And did your duty with the best of wills ...
 Conqueror, set your foot upon my neck,
 Teach the loser what you learned before him
 In your defeat, the sweets of subjection,
 Groveler teach me how to lick his spittle ...¹²⁵

Odysseus is the scrupulous pragmatist who accepts his duty and seeks to live another day. “You’re not the first man in our war to act / Against his will,” he reminds Neoptolemus, offering his own and Achilles’ conscriptions as cases in point.¹²⁶ He is well-meaning even in his blunt severity towards Neoptolemus (“... alive is how I need you . . .”),¹²⁷ and tries to persuade Philoctetes to spare Neoptolemus when he believes his own death is inevitable. Only Philoctetes resists and maintains his independence throughout, and in so doing ensures his demise. There is no attempt by Müller to elicit pity for the outcast, who mixes self-loathing with hateful invective. Philoctetes’ fierce defiance is brought into sharper focus by his employment of a ruse in which he feigns submission to the yoke of compulsion in a soliloquy reminiscent of Ajax’s *Trugrede* (“deception speech”) in Sophocles’ *Ajax*.¹²⁸

¹²³ Mandel (1981) 238.

¹²⁴ Mandel (1981) 236.

¹²⁵ Mandel (1981) 236.

¹²⁶ Mandel (1981) 227.

¹²⁷ Mandel (1981) 225.

¹²⁸ This echo is noted by Mandel (1981) 240.

Müller's play offers no *ex machina* intervention by Heracles. His is a world in which the gods have no place; they are "unemployed," to borrow a descriptor from the play. "Learn from the gods another day. Today / You are a man and live with other men," Odysseus advises Neoptolemus.¹²⁹ In this milieu, there is no way out for Philoctetes other than death. While in Sophocles' play Neoptolemus restrains Philoctetes' arm as the latter draws his bow to shoot Odysseus, in Müller's version Neoptolemus runs him through with his sword. Odysseus coopts Neoptolemus to bury Philoctetes' body, but then changes his mind and exhumes the corpse, which he believes will offer evidence corroborating the fabricated report that he plans to deliver to the Greek commanders that Philoctetes was killed by Trojans before they could save him, a masterpiece of false war propaganda. Thus even in death, Philoctetes is used and abused. Consumed by remorse, Neoptolemus announces his plan to kill Odysseus and claim that he too was killed by the Trojans, but once again he is outmaneuvered by Odysseus, who warns him that the Greeks will never believe his story without a witness to attest to it. The play closes with Odysseus ordering Neoptolemus to carry Philoctetes' corpse while he takes from him the bow. Neoptolemus' moral sensibilities have thus been tainted by his complicity in murder and deceit, both undertaken for the greater good. In this drama, there is no hero nor villain, but rather a clash between competing interests, with the needs and claims of the individual subordinated and indeed sacrificed to those of society at large, presented as the greater good, an ideology that proves hollow. The play, like that of Sophocles, ends with the successful completion of the mission, but one consummated through hate, not friendship.

Müller's *Philoctet* has enjoyed numerous performances. In the 2002 production at the Nationaltheater in Mannheim directed by Laurent Chétouane with set design by Patricia Talacko, a scrim was used to separate audience from stage; translucent and barely noticeable to the audience, it served to block out audience members for the actors, thereby paying homage to the tradition of Brecht's experimental *Lehrstücke* ("learning plays") that influenced Müller, which replaced the focus on theater as entertainment for an outside audience with a focus on the learning carried out jointly by actors and audience in response to the issues under scrutiny.¹³⁰

Thus the set was designed to present the staged play as an exposition to be regarded as something both close and very distant at the same time. Recently *Philoctet* returned to the stage of the Munich Residenztheater, site of its

129 Mandel (1981) 244.

130 For this analysis of the Mannheim production's staging and its relation to Brecht's *Lehrstücke*, see Müller-Scholl (2014), of which my treatment here is a cursory synopsis.

premiere, where a 2015 production directed by Ivan Panteleev received universal critical acclaim for its strong acting and stripped down dramaturgy, well suited to a play that privileges the spoken word over stage action.¹³¹

Another play with a strongly political reception is the work of Irish playwright and winner of the 1995 Nobel Prize in Literature Seamus Heaney. Titled *The Cure at Troy: A Version of Sophocles' Philoctetes*, it was first performed in 1990 in Derry, Northern Ireland by the Field Day Theatre Company, founded by Brian Friel and Stephen Rea as a cultural and intellectual response to the entrenched partisanship that divided Northern Ireland.¹³² The production, directed by Stephen Rea and Bob Crowley, then went on tour in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and ended in London.¹³³ The play has since enjoyed many restagings on both sides of the Atlantic. A 2008 production at the Seattle Repertory Theater, directed by Tina Landau, presented a set of rocks and mud to evoke the barren volcanic landscape of Lemnos; Philoctetes, played by Boris McGiver, dragged himself laboriously up the steep hillside, slipping on the scree. At the outset the embassy disembarked onto the island in pitch darkness, using flashlights to probe the unfamiliar and unwelcoming surroundings.

Heaney follows his Sophoclean model closely for the most part, with just a few significant exceptions. He replaces the male chorus of sailors with a female chorus of three; their gender, number, and metapoetical function in the play might evoke associations with the three Graces. They break from the Sophoclean script at the beginning and end of the play. In their prologue, they identify the problem that demands a cure, as the play's title suggests:

Philoctetes.

Hercules.

Odysseus.

Heroes. Victims. Gods and human beings.

All throwing shapes, every one of them

Convinced he's in the right, all of them glad

131 See Spatz (2015), which excerpts reviews published in the *Süddeutschen Zeitung*, *Abendzeitung*, *Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung*, *Münchner Merkur*, and *Frankfurter Rundschau*.

132 For discussion of Heaney's play, see Denard (2000) 1–18; Richards (2000) 109–19; Roisman (2005) 119–21; Taplin (2005) 145–7, 158–67; Budelmann (2007) 458–60; Morwood (2008) 108–15; Schein (2013) 55–6; Tziouvas (2014) 311–2; Hardwick (2015) 821–37.

133 The program lists performances at 20 venues, 10 in Northern Ireland and 10 in the Republic of Ireland during October–December 1990. The final show was at the Tricycle Theatre in London in April 1991.

To repeat themselves and their every last mistake,
No matter what.

People so deep into
Their own self-pity, self-pity buoys them up . . .¹³⁴

Heaney's chorus takes a step back and reflects on the root problem: not just Philoctetes, but others too carry with them resentment for hurt, "licking their wounds and flashing them around like decorations."¹³⁵ Past suffering has made Philoctetes harder, his position more entrenched; "Your wound is what you feed on, Philoctetes," the chorus says. "Stop eating yourself up with hate and come with us."¹³⁶

The chorus recognizes its complicity, yet also sees the situation from the outside:

For my part is the chorus, and the chorus
Is more or less a borderline between
The you and the me and the it of it.

Between
The gods' and human beings' sense of things."¹³⁷

Heaney restores the gods to the play as the impetus that can bring about the miracle that is change when change does not seem possible; as in Sophocles' play, they provide the tail wind. And the chorus serves a daemonic function as their agents in stirring a realization of the possible and of the disjuncture between the world as it is and the world as it should be. At the same time, the chorus represents the citizenry embroiled in the conflict, and change is presented as an internal process that begins with self-reflection and admission of complicity, and proceeds to acknowledgment of the perspectives of others and their need for healing and restoration.¹³⁸ This shift is seen most

¹³⁴ Heaney (1991) 1.

¹³⁵ Heaney (1991) 2.

¹³⁶ Heaney (1991) 61.

¹³⁷ Heaney (1991) 2.

¹³⁸ Heaney in the program notes to the original Derry production writes (Heaney 1990): "In the original play, this conflict is resolved by the appearance of the god Hercules, but in the present version I have attempted to present the conclusion as the inevitable culmination of an honestly-endured spiritual and psychological crisis . . ."

clearly in Neoptolemus. "I'm an affliction to myself," he admits to Philoctetes; "I'll be seen for what I am. I just can't face it."¹³⁹ This is followed by action: he returns the bow, taking unilateral steps to make amends in spite of Philoctetes' skepticism. His initiation of the process of restorative justice returns him to his old self as his father's son, as Philoctetes acknowledges. Neoptolemus can now challenge Philoctetes to reciprocate; he can now serve as mediator between Philoctetes and the Greeks, though his efforts don't succeed at first. Philoctetes falls back into old ways of thinking ("...you'll be tainted with their guilt / Just by association")¹⁴⁰ and accuses Neoptolemus of "turncoat talk."¹⁴¹ In the end, however, Neoptolemus' perseverance and good faith win out; Philoctetes responds to Neoptolemus' pledge with a performative act of his own, described in the stage notes as a "rite of departure,"¹⁴² thereby breaking the impasse and bringing about a rapprochement that is monumentalized by flashes of light and rumbling thunder that resolve into a "stillness," before finally erupting in full force. This and other vestiges nod to the Sophoclean ending by acknowledging a numinous dimension to conflict resolution while retaining a focus on the human parties.¹⁴³ The dual determinism of fate and human agency runs as a thread throughout the play; but the former is often subsumed into the latter:

Call miracle self-healing:
 The utter, self-revealing
 Double-take of feeling.
 If there's fire on the mountain
 Or lightning and storm
 And a god speaks from the sky

That means someone is hearing
 The outcry and the birth-cry
 Of new life at its term.¹⁴⁴

139 Heaney (1991) 49.

140 Heaney (1991) 73.

141 Heaney (1991) 74.

142 Heaney (1991) 76.

143 The directives that Heracles gives out at the conclusion of Sophocles' plays are delivered by the chorus, "ritually clamant, as Hercules," Heaney (2011) 78.

144 Heaney (1991) 77–8.

The chorus' references towards the end of the play to the "innocent in gaols," "hunger-striker's father," and "police widow in veils"¹⁴⁵ directed attention to the entrenched sectarian conflict between Catholic Unionists and Protestant Nationalists in Northern Ireland, fueled by bombings and political assassinations even as the first tentative talks were held between members of the main political parties. At the time of writing the hope that "once in a lifetime / the longed-for tidal wave / of justice can ride up, / and hope and history rhyme"¹⁴⁶ was a decidedly distant hope for Northern Ireland, a "half-true rhyme," to borrow a phrase from the final verse of the play. And yet global events leading up to the play's first staging fanned the kindling of optimism, including in quick succession the end of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the dismantling of the Iron Curtain in Hungary, protests in Tiananmen Square, democratic elections in Poland dominated by the Solidarity movement, the opening and subsequent demolition of the Berlin Wall, the fall of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu and election of philosopher-playwright-dissident Vaclav Havel as president of Czechoslovakia.¹⁴⁷ The play and its title deliberately shift the focus from the wound to the cure.

Heaney's commitment to Sophocles' text leads to an awkward combination of new life and death in the closing scene of the play. The chorus as the voice of Heracles order Philoctetes to "go and be cured and capture Troy," and "conclude the sore / and cruel stalemate of our war" by winning "by fair combat," warning him to "shun reprisal killings when that's done."¹⁴⁸ Performed amidst a conflict that did not allow a military solution, this plot denouement of peace achieved through war is unsettling.

More recent adaptations of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* have focused on Philoctetes' identity as a veteran and victim of the brutality and trauma of war. *The Angry Wounds* by English playwright Julian Armitstead received its first staged reading at Oxford University in November 2009, directed by Alex Clifton. Armitstead strips away much of the classical apparatus, eliminates the chorus, and adds a fourth character: Diomedes. The scenes shuttle between Troy and Lemnos and shift forward and back in time.

145 Heaney (1991) 77.

146 Heaney (1991) 77.

147 Heaney in Eyres (2001): "I started writing the play at the end of 1989 when all the great events were happening in eastern Europe. For once, I felt, the historical record was giving a glimmer of justification to some sort of optimism."

148 Heaney (1991) 79.

The play explores the traumatic effects of war on those who experience it. Neoptolemus is the raw new recruit, plunged into a mayhem for which he is not prepared:

NEOPTOLEMUS:

(With intense mental difficulty)

The streets of Troy;

When we break through:

I trip over limbs;

A woman's torso.

Under our feet there's flesh,

No longer flesh.

But meat

Dropped from a butcher's bench.

DIOMEDES:

Steady!

NEOPTOLEMUS:

One time I slip:

DIOMEDES:

Watch it!

NEOPTOLEMUS:

Something spills from the gutter.

What in hell's name -?

PHILOCTETES:

(cutting in; cruel with it)

Whoever said the Trojans lacked guts,

Was lying.¹⁴⁹

Neoptolemus is broken in by the drill sergeant Diomedes, and stripped of his sensibilities:

¹⁴⁹ The script is as yet unpublished at the time of writing this chapter.

On your hands and knees.
 You're a dog till I tell you otherwise.
 A dog.

The process of breaking in the squaddie is placed in the broader context of the psychological toll of warfare: the demands on soldiers to follow orders without question, the dehumanizing that is both a tactic of training and a consequence of war. We see the effects of war not just on Philoctetes but on all the characters. Diomedes attempts to suppress what he has experienced; he hopes to return to civilian life as if nothing has changed, and plans to open a pub. Odysseus, despite being the public face of the war effort, experiences regrets, and is haunted by what he has done to Philoctetes:

ODYSSEUS:
 Memories can be as dangerous as wounds, Diomedes.
 They can fester and stink like a cut to the bowel.
 Until the whole gut is rotten;
 The whole body paralysed.
 What do you do with a wound that won't heal?

DIOMEDES:
 You cut it out.

ODYSSEUS:
 We tried doing that.

DIOMEDES:
 Then you leave it.
 You try to forget.

Philoctetes is a poignant and richly-drawn character, a war veteran who finds himself disconnected from society. When Neoptolemus visits him on Lemnos, he pulls out chocolate and cigarettes from his backpack to offer Philoctetes as a guest-gift, and asks him his name. "Cyclops," is the response. Philoctetes disgusts people. "Wherever people are, I repel them!" Philoctetes says to Neoptolemus. Like many soldiers suffering from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), he is numb:

Too many things,
 Too many things going on in here.

I'm not well.
 As you see.
 How can I be?
 After what's been done.
 So I forget how these things are.
 Like sorrow for your loss.
 I search in vain for that:
 Feeling.

The Angry Wounds attests to the value of telling one's story when others are truly listening. Philoctetes has been desensitized by trauma, but rediscovers the ability to feel when he and Neoptolemus share with each other intimacies of their experiences. They begin to tell their stories—of disappointment, betrayal, loss. Neoptolemus tells of his dead-beat absent dad Achilles and his violent temper. As a young boy he learned to keep a low profile. The stories of Neoptolemus and Philoctetes interweave as the one responds to the other. Philoctetes responds to Neoptolemus' grief at the loss of his father. And he finds himself recovering the first stirrings of feeling:

Your talk of home
 Restored my appetite.
 I thought I'd forgotten about that.
 About pleasure;
 Desire.
 Thought it don't matter no more.
 Gods, I was wrong.
 Do you know what?
 I've got a hard on.
 Down here I've got a hard on.

In *The Angry Wounds* the complex realities of lived experience contradict the tidy "facts" of the dominant mythical narrative promulgated by those in power. This is a play written in the shadow of a long and drawn-out Iraq War when war weariness and skepticism of the claims of political leaders were at a height. Similarly, the play's intertextuality with Sophocles' *Philoctetes* serves not to authenticate or elevate through engagement with the canon, but rather to challenge received tradition.

In the United States, two New-York based directors have brought the play to a wider audience. Brian Doerries and his theatre company "Outside the Wire" have toured the U.S. since 2009 with their *Theater of War* project, putting on

readings of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and *Ajax*, plays which are characterized as depicting "the psychological and physical wounds inflicted upon warriors by war." The company's website describes the goals of the project as follows:¹⁵⁰

By presenting these plays to military and civilian audiences, our hope is to de-stigmatize psychological injury, increase awareness of post-deployment psychological health issues, disseminate information regarding available resources, and foster greater family, community, and troop resilience.

The readings are a spring-board for audience discussion about difficult subjects, accompanied by comments from a panel of veterans, relatives of veterans and therapists. Readings of excerpts from Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and *Women of Trachis* also form the core of "Outside the Wire's" *End of Life* project, which focuses on issues related to chronic suffering and end of life. For Doerries, these classical plays offer a safe space for communities to discuss sensitive subjects by being both at one remove from contemporary events and at the same time timeless. His is a positivist view of Greek tragedy's therapeutic efficacy, "the timeless power of an ancient artistic tradition to comfort the afflicted."¹⁵¹ And the largely favorable reception of his projects by media and audience members alike indicates that his town-hall style events succeed in resonating with modern day lived experiences.

Peter Meineck, a former Royal Marine and founding director of Aquila Theater, has also taken Greek drama to communities across the U.S. as part of two NEH-funded projects, *Ancient Greeks/Modern Lives* (2000–2013), and *YouStories* (2013-onwards). Like Doerries' project, they have enjoyed a high profile in the national media. *YouStories* "uses performances from classic plays like *Philoctetes* to connect veterans and the public, finding resonance between the ancient words and veterans' own experiences to create new stories."¹⁵² The project included a production of *Philoctetes* titled *A Female Philoctetes*, with a chorus of veterans playing alongside actors from Aquila Theater. The show,

150 <http://www.outsidethewirellc.com/projects/theater-of-war/overview>. See Meineck 2009. For a video interview with Brian Doerries and actor Elizabeth Marvel and accompanying article, see Cohen/Rodgers (2011). Nelson (2011) provides an overview of the project with a first-handed report of a *TOW* production at Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) in Bethesda, Maryland in April 2009, including scenes from *Philoctetes*.

151 Publisher's blurb for Doerries (2015): <http://knopfdoubleday.com/book/217973/the-theater-of-war/>.

152 <http://50.neh.gov/projects/aquila-theatre>.

directed by Desiree Sanchez, premiered at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York in April 2014. Attention focused especially on psychological wounds. Julia Crockett, in the title role of Philoctetes, played Philoctetes' outbursts of pain as the flashbacks and hallucinations induced by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), delivering lines such as "It's eating away at me . . . Shooting through me . . . they're shooting through me" staring wide eyed into the distance while shooting at invisible targets as a strident flute accompaniment punctuated her shots. "Don't touch me!" (*Philoctetes* 762) takes on new meaning with a female Philoctetes. So too Philoctetes' suicide attempt (*Philoctetes* 1001–2), abandonment, and lack of access to medical care all take on contemporary resonances related to issues currently faced by veterans. A restaging of the play, this time with a cast entirely comprised of veterans, opened at the GK ArtsCenter in New York in April, 2016, as part of the *Warrior Chorus* project which will perform across the United States. These projects follow in the footsteps of the pioneering work of clinical psychiatrist Jonathan Shay, who compared the psychological effects of war on soldiers as described in Homer's *Iliad* with the experiences of Vietnam veterans.¹⁵³

Screen

Tom Stoppard wrote a television play titled *Neutral Ground*, which aired in the United Kingdom in December 1968.¹⁵⁴ Described by Stoppard himself as a blend of Sophocles' play and the spy novels of John le Carré, it sets its plot in the treacherous world of Cold War espionage. A former agent for the British with the code name Philo has left Moscow and dropped out of sight in self-imposed exile in the countryside of a fictional country in eastern Europe, disillusioned by his British handlers' readiness to sacrifice him. With the Russians on his trail and seeking to eliminate him, the Odysseus character Otis sends his agent Acherson to find and reenlist him when it becomes clear that he can provide them with crucial intelligence. He finds a disillusioned and disheveled man driven to drink, and uses a combination of deception and persuasion in a bid to gain his trust.¹⁵⁵ *Neutral Ground* received mostly negative reviews and has been largely ignored by classicists.

Philoctetes features in Disney's 1997 animated feature film *Hercules* as "Phil," voiced by Danny Devito; the film was directed by Ron Clements and John Musker. Hercules seeks out Phil on his island to request that he train him to become a great hero. At first, Phil refuses, noting that he is retired after

¹⁵³ Shay (1994).

¹⁵⁴ See Mandel (1981) 154; Budelmann 2007 (458).

¹⁵⁵ See Jenkins (1989) 21–3; Guralnick (2001) 79–80.

the disappointment of a long line of heroes who failed him; these include Perseus, Odysseus, Theseus, Jason, and Achilles. But after he sees that Hercules can go the distance by witnessing the boy's great strength, and is struck by a lightning bolt from Zeus, he agrees to help. The two join forces, fueled by a shared desire to achieve greatness. Phil is portrayed as a satyr, drawing perhaps on the mythical tradition of the centaur Chiron as tutor to Achilles.¹⁵⁶ As a satyr, Phil is characteristically lascivious: we first encounter him watching nymphs bathing as Herc visits him on his island, though in this film written for a young audience his lustiness is portrayed as innocuous flirtation that inevitably fails.¹⁵⁷ Breezy references to other myths and characters abound; when Hercules first enters Phil's home, he bumps his head on a hanging crossbeam that was once the mast of the Argo.

In Disney's TV television series *Hercules: The Animated Series* (65 episodes, airing 1998–1999), a spin-off of the *Hercules* movie, Philoctetes once again is portrayed as a satyr and assumes the role of hero coach for the teenage Hercules.¹⁵⁸ The series (directed by Tad Stones/Bob Kline/Phil Weinstein/Eddy Houchins) is targeted towards a juvenile audience and contains a mixture of storylines geared towards Hercules' ascension to herohood as well as his learning to cope with the everyday struggles of adolescence and high school. Hercules is an ordinary and relatable teenager, yet one who enjoys special hero powers.¹⁵⁹ Enrolled at Prometheus Academy, where he is taught his subjects by teachers such as Herodotus (history), Ptolemy (astronomy) and Euclid (geometry), he seeks out Philoctetes (Phil) for extracurricular physical training to become a hero. Phil's island, an inhospitable environment in Sophocles' play, is now the setting for the comfortable home and hero training gym of both Philoctetes and Hercules.¹⁶⁰ It contains a variety of landscapes, including grassy hills, rocky cliffs, dense forests, grassless planes, and marshes, but no cave. Phil lives inside the broken head of a large Greek structure, perhaps

156 Chiron functions as Phil's rival trainer in Season 1, Episode 23.

157 For critiques of the film's messaging, including its lionizing of celebrity culture and self-promotional references to Disney characters, see Ward (2002) 80–95. Contra Winkler (2005) 406, who sees the film as “a satire of modern consumerism and celebrity cults.”

158 See Chiu (2014) for an overview of this series as well as Disney's *Young Hercules* series (1998–90).

159 In Season 1, Episode 3, Hercules proudly states, “I’m a hero in training; I have to listen to my coach,” to which his friend Icarus adds, “But Herc is also a teenager.”

160 Philoctetes' home on Lemnos is shown in Season 1, Episodes 4, 8, 12, 15, 16, 29, 30, 34, 36, 39, 43, 44, and 47, and Season 2, Episodes 1, 3, 6, 8, and 10. His shed or armory is best seen in Season 1, Episodes 4, 36, and 47.

intended to suggest the Colossus of Rhodes,¹⁶¹ which contains a bedroom, a kitchen, and an armory where he stores his gear and where Hercules sleeps. He is well-fed and corpulent, and enjoys social interaction as he and Hercules travel far and wide to defeat monsters of myth. Like his Sophoclean counterpart, Phil prizes truth and honor, most evident in his “hero rules” which he teaches to Hercules throughout the series; not lying, for example, is hero rule 189, he tells Hercules.¹⁶² Overall, though, he is a new Hollywood creation, who is at turns sentimental, bubbly, temperamental, whimsical, and easily corrupted by the prospect of fame and glory. While in Sophocles’ play Heracles comes to the aid of Philoctetes, here Phil is Herc’s mentor or “coach” and comic side-kick as his protégé comes of age through heroic exploits and other adventures that go awry, as when Phil leaves Hercules and Hermes at home while he attends the convention of the Brotherhood of Satyrs, Minotaurs and other Half-Humans, and they throw a bacchanal that spirals out of control, and are then assigned by Phil twenty thousand laps as punishment.¹⁶³

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Philoctetes*

Milani (1879) offers an early and detailed study of Philoctetes’ representation in ancient literature and art; like most subsequent scholarship, it considers his place in the mythical tradition more broadly, not restricting itself to works directly influenced by Sophocles’ play. For Philoctetes in ancient art, more recent surveys include Mandel (1981), Simon (1996), and Flashar (1999), with Taplin (2007) analyzing depictions of Philoctetes in vase-paintings; all draw on the entry by Pipili (1994) in the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*; Mandel and Flashar also discuss select post-classical visual representations of Philoctetes, though post-classical reception in the fine arts remains an area that warrants further study and is thus more amply treated in this chapter. Reid (1993) provides a valuable point of entry to reception in all art forms, even if the catalog is not exhaustive. Mandel (1981) offers a wide-ranging if idiosyncratic survey of Philoctetes’ representation in literature, visual arts, and theatrical productions from 1502 through 1896. A shorter survey appears in Schein (2013). Perhaps the most accessible overview is that by Roisman (2005), who devotes a chapter to post-classical reception.

161 See <http://disney.wikia.com/wiki/Philoctetes>.

162 Season 1, Episode 39.

163 Season 1, Episode 18.

Selection of Further Readings (and Other Resources)

Literature

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PART 2

The Tragedy of Destiny



Oedipus the King

Rosanna Lauriola

“... I have come here myself, I, the man called Oedipus, renowned by everyone,” (Sophocles, Oedipus the King 7–8),¹ Oedipus declares, to assure, with his very presence, the people of Thebes about his commitment to the safety of the community afflicted by a devastating plague.

Ironically—it is tempting to say—the one who turns out to not know who he is, and ‘what in his name is,’ introduces himself by declaring his identity with firm confidence, at the incipit of a ‘journey’ which will gradually destroy that confidence while unveiling the long-ignored real identity of the ‘traveler’.² It is the same confidence that epic heroes display when it comes to facing a duel or a crucial engagement (whether with an enemy or not), to assert themselves and to provide a proof of authority (see, e.g., Homer, Iliad 6. 19–21). Fame is the ground of such self-assertion but not without a reference to one’s own genealogical lineage, which completes the declaration of one’s own name. “I am Odysseus, Laertes’ son,” the hero says in answer to Alcinous’ invitation to tell his name, “renowned by all for my tricks—my fame extends up to the heaven” (Homer, Odyssey 9. 19–20).³ The lack of such an important indication as the genealogical lineage in Oedipus’ self-declaration reveals the fallacious essence of his self-knowledge: his reputation must be the only proof of his authority for the people of Thebes and for himself. Ironically—once again—that reputation, which has gained Oedipus that authority and self-confidence, comes from a heroic success that seals his very downfall (rather than extending his glory to the heaven!): the solution of the riddle of the Sphinx, a hybrid monster that was decimating Thebes, as it killed everyone who

1 Unless indicated differently in a footnote, all translations into English from any language other than English are my own.

2 This confident declaration of his own name, along with his notoriety, might certainly add to the irony that, as is well known, informs the entire tragedy: see below, 160 with n.40. In my opinion, what makes it more striking is the fact that in the prologues of all the other tragedies by Sophocles, the characters that are involved in the main action are introduced and identified through the patronymic and/or a reference to the lineage, à la Homer (see, e.g. *Ajax* 1; *Electra* 1–2; *Women of Trachis* 6–8; 19, etc.): a detailed analysis of this matter is in Lauriola (2000) 36–7. The missing of a reference to the lineage, which in turn defined the notoriety of a hero and worked as a ‘business card’, is a significant one, as I argued above. Different is the case in the prologue of Seneca’s Oedipus: see below, 172–4.

3 Regarding this, see, e.g., Arrighetti (1991).

vainly attempted to solve its enigma (e.g. *Sophocles, Oedipus the King* 35–9; 395–400; 440–3; 1524–5). This success makes the people sure that they can count on their king in the new predicament in which they happen to be. This success gives Oedipus the confidence that he will not disappoint his people's expectations. Yet, this same success has been his ruin—as Tiresias claims (*Sophocles, Oedipus the King* 442). The irony—the ‘bullet’ that outlines the trajectory of Oedipus’ life story—is even more striking than Tiresias’ words imply: he who defeated the Sphinx by understanding the riddle through his intellectual brightness could not understand, until the very end, the riddle that he himself and his so-confidently-declared name embody. Oedipus, the swollen-foot man, the one who knows about feet,⁴ i.e., the one whose feet work as a physical and intellectual ‘brand’, is an enigma to himself for almost his entire life, a puzzling mix of different identities in a single one: a son-parricide, a son-husband of his mother, a father-brother of his sons (*Sophocles, Oedipus the King* 1183–5 cf. with 457–60).

The tragic story of *Sophocles’ Oedipus* is the story of the courageous and persistent self-investigation and self-discovery of a man whose acumen has remained, and remains, a hallmark of his personality,⁵ whose intellectual and spiritual strength exemplifies the resilience of human being before appalling disasters—as is typical of the Sophoclean hero—and whose path of life was meant to be, for the ancient audience, a paradigmatic mirror of a belief system in which destiny is an inescapable force.⁶ Before he was even born, Oedipus was in fact doomed to be the swollen-foot man who knew about feet, and to turn out to be that puzzling mix of identities described above. He becomes ‘Oedipus’ unaware, which seals his innocence, or, more precisely, his innocent guilt—to continue on the track of his enigmatic, puzzling mix of identities. His subtle perseverance in finding out the truth about himself even when he starts suspecting he might not be who he believes he was, but someone ‘horrible’;⁷ his deep love for the truth no matter what (*Sophocles,*

4 About the meanings, and related etymologies, of the name Oedipus, see below, 160–1 with n. 43.

5 In *Sophocles*, for instance, until the very end Oedipus’ sharp intelligence is emphasized, as the chorus ends the play by addressing Oedipus as the one “who understood the famous riddles,” (*Sophocles, Oedipus the King* 1525); regarding this see, also, below, 159 with n. 39.

6 I shall discuss later the different interpretations of this tragedy, including the ‘fatalistic’ one, which is particularly suitable for Seneca’s adaptation as well.

7 Oedipus is a serious investigator—as Schopenhauer said—who seeks the truth regardless of his own welfare: Ferenczi 1912 (the letter of the philosopher is dated November 11, 1815); “To me personally Oedipus is a kind of symbol of human intelligence which cannot rest until it has solved all the riddles”: Dodds (1966) 48. For similar observations on the topic, see also, to mention a few, Delcourt (1944) 108; Edmunds (1981) 19; Fusillo (1996) 33, 90–1; Paduano (2008) 62–3.

Oedipus the King 1058–9; 1065; 1169–70)—all of this testifies to his pure, heroic grandeur. Yet in the reception history of this tragedy what mostly has survived, whether in a serious or in a more ‘jocose’ tone, are the ‘crimes’ of this innocent guilty one:⁸ parricide—often with political overtones—and incest—mostly with psychological implications—. Undeniably, at least since the beginning of the 20th century, Freud’s theorization of the well-known ‘Oedipus Complex’ has exerted an unavoidable influence, although—as it will be seen—that’s water under the bridge now.

In Literature

Undoubtedly, Sophocles’ Oedipus is the Oedipus most familiar to all, also ‘thanks’ to Freud’s appropriation, whether or not it should even be mentioned. But, as is well known, the 5th-century BC Athenian tragedians built their plays on raw material from the great epic tradition—Homer, in particular—without excluding the ‘interference’ of some lyric poetry. It thus should not come as a surprise that the very first *début* of Oedipus on the literary stage is in Homer (ca. 8th century BC). In both poems Oedipus’ presence is almost incidental, subsidiary to other references; it also testifies to a different version of his story. In both poems not only does he survive his ‘tragedy’ without inflicting on himself (so it seems) any punishment, i.e., the Sophoclean self-blindness, but he also keeps living, and reigning, in Thebes.⁹ In *Iliad* 23. 677–80, through the main reference to a certain Mekisteus once visiting Thebes, Homer mentions Oedipus’ funeral.¹⁰ In *Odyssey* 11. 271–8, during the so-called *Nekyia*

8 The jocose tone, mentioned above, will sometimes inform the hero’s intellectual brightness as well, but mostly for the purpose of emphasizing the crimes themselves: see below, e.g., 203 with n. 192; 215–6.

9 As it is well known, in Euripides’ *Phoenician Women*, too, Oedipus appears to be still alive and continues to live in Thebes, although he does not die there as he is exiled by Creon (cf. Euripides, *Phoenician Women* 1585–94). The discussion on the precursors of Sophocles’ version, which I am reporting above is mostly based on De Kock (1961). An interesting revision of the topic pertaining in particular to the presence of Oedipus material in Homer and Hesiod is in Cingano (1992). See, also, Lacore (1999), and below, n. 12. For a list of texts testifying different traditions pertaining to the final events and death of Oedipus, see Bettini/Guidorizzi (2004) 230. With reference to the broad Theban myth and its presence in the epic and lyric poetry before Sophocles, see, more recently, Bizzarri (2014). Regarding the whole Theban cycle, see Davies (2015).

10 This is also in agreement with Hesiod, *Fr.* 192 Merkelbach-West, on which see Bizzarri (2014) 15–6 (with further bibliography in nn. 16–19): cf. also the lyric poet Stesichorus (7th–6th century BC) *Fr.* 222b Davies, on which Bizzarri (2014) 16–8.

(i.e., the summoning of, and conversation with, the spirits of dead), the appearance of Jocasta, here alternatively named Epicaste, prompts the poet to provide a concise, yet essential, story of her husband-son to contextualize Jocasta's presence in the Underworld:

Then I saw Oedipus' mother, the beautiful Epicaste, / who, in the ignorance of her mind, undertook a monstrous deed / as she married her own son; and when he had killed his father, / he made her his wife. And soon the gods made it all known among men. / But in beloved Thebes he, with all his sorrows, continued / to be lord of the Cadmeans [...]; / while she went to the house of Hades [...] / after knotting a noose and hanging from the high ceiling / overwhelmed by her sorrow; but to him she left all the sorrows, / all that a mother's Avengers bring to pass.

Parricide and incest, two of the main hallmarks of Oedipus' tragic 'career', seem here to be just episodes in the life of the hero, who, although suffering much sorrow, nevertheless continues to live in Thebes and be its king. Nothing is said of Oedipus' self-blinding and of the incestuous offspring. The omission of these components of Oedipus' story has been variously explained:¹¹ the mention occurs in a series of passages in which Homer would tend to eliminate gruesome details, but the parricide and incest are too basic to the story that he has to grant them a reference; or, more simply, Homer prefers to innovate and/or rework myths, rather than present an accurate version, as they are available in other sources now lost to us. In the selection and/or innovation of the details, one stands out: significantly the discovery of the truth is not the result of the persistent detective work on the part of Oedipus—the other, if not 'the', hallmark of this Sophoclean hero. It was the gods who 'soon' (ἄφαρ)¹² reveal all things. Furthermore, in the *Odyssey* passage Oedipus ends up being cursed by his mother-wife (ll. 277–8).¹³

In Hesiod's *Works and Days* (8th century BC), too, Oedipus's death is placed in Thebes, where he perhaps continued to reign after all (ll. 161–4).¹⁴ In no

11 For a good summary, see Davies (2015) 13–7, on which my discussion is based as well.

12 This adverb has been much discussed as it seems that it would rule out the production of children, which would thus be the 'product' of a second marriage: for a synthesis of the related discussion, with the indication of the ancient sources of the mythical variant pertaining to a second marriage, see Davies (2015) 13–5.

13 About this, cf., also, Pindar, *Olympian* 2. 41–2.

14 More precisely, line 163 refers to a 'fighting for the sheep of Oedipus'. Scholars have been disagreeing about which war here the poet meant to refer to, whether the well known one between Argos and Thebes, later put on the stage by Aeschylus through his play *The Seven at Thebes*, or rather a local war, provoked by the typical epic motif of cattle-raid-

passage is there a mention of the Sphinx which—as hinted at above, and as it will be seen—plays a crucial role in the story of Sophocles' Oedipus. Hesiod does mention the Sphinx within the description of the monstrous genealogy of Phorcy and Keto (*Theogony* 270–336). In *Theogony* 326, the Sphinx appears significantly connoted as ὀλοήν . . . Καδμείοισιν ὄλεθρον (“a deadly . . . destroyer of the Cadmeans”), which might imply an allusion at one important tessera of the complex mosaic of the Sophoclean hero's life story. Nothing else is said of her, nor is there a hint about her as ‘the poser of riddles’, which is mostly taken as a later intellectualizing refinement of Oedipus' encounter.¹⁵

The few brief mentions of Oedipus in ancient epic, the context in which the Sphinx occurs in Hesiod and, as for the Sphinx in particular, some material evidence, namely a red-figure Attic *lekythos* showing a naked man, labeled as Oedipus, wielding a club against the Sphinx—¹⁶ all of this has prompted scholars to conclude that overall Oedipus was conceived of as a hero of physical strength,¹⁷ much like Herakles, who by force, rather than by intellectual prowess, has gained his reputation. This picture cannot be corroborated with absolute certainty by the other epics of the archaic period, i.e., the so-called *Epic cycle* (6th century ?), now lost. In particular one of them could have contributed to a clear picture, i.e., the *Theban Cycle*.¹⁸ It consisted of four poems in two of which Oedipus seems to have played some major role. These two poems are *Oedipodeia* (“Poem about Oedipus”), likely dealing with the events that ultimately led up to the assault of the Seven against Thebes, and *Thebais* (“Poem about Thebes”), which, very likely, was the account of the Seven's failed campaign. The number of the fragments is very tiny; additionally, none of them is particularly informative. Therefore, all reconstructions remain hypothetical with ‘pro and contra’ arguments being almost in balance. Generally speaking, scholars tend to agree on the fact that of the two poems, *Oedipodeia* portrays Oedipus still as an epic hero, i.e., as a man not deeply affected by the effect of

ing, between Thebes and a nearby city, a war in which Oedipus, here portrayed as an epic ‘muscle’ hero, rather than as an intellectual one, was killed. For an accurate discussion of this Hesiodic passage, with a synthesis of various scholarly positions, see, e.g., Cingano (1992).

- 15 About the connection of the Sphinx with the story of Oedipus, and the ‘metamorphosis’ that the connection underwent (e.g., from a ‘physical confrontation’ to an intellectual one), see the detailed overview, with abundant bibliographic indication, in Davies (2015) 9–13.
- 16 About this *lekythos*, see De Kock (1961) 11 with n. 24; also Davies (2015) 11.
- 17 See above, n. 15.
- 18 On these two poems of the Epic cycle, see more recently Davies (2015) esp. 1–105. For the information I provided above I am much in debt to Davies.

incest and parricide. He in fact does not blind himself, but he marries again and continues to reign over Thebes; he finally dies gloriously in battle. It was the tragedians who “raised the level of horror.”¹⁹ On the contrary, *Thebais* presents an Oedipus remarkably similar to the hero of tragedy, in particular to the irascible and mad/bad-tempered Oedipus, which is the way he is referred to and described in Aeschylus’ *Seven at Thebes* (e.g., ll. 724, 780), and in Euripides’ *Phoenician Women* (e.g., ll. 66, 874). Indeed in *Thebais* he twice cursed his sons (*Fr.* 2, 3 cf. Aeschylus, *Seven at Thebes* 721–6; Euripides, *Phoenician Women* 1539–45).²⁰

In what has survived before Sophocles, the lack of clear references to the encounter with the Sphinx, above all as an ‘intellectual’ challenge and contest, and to Apollo’s oracle, is certainly striking. Sporadic mentions of both are in the lyric poet Pindar (6th–5th century BC). In *Olympian* 2. 35–40, there is a reference to Apollo’s oracle as fulfilled by Oedipus when he murdered his father; in *Pythian* 4. 263, there is an allusion to the wisdom of Oedipus, which implies a reference to the ‘occasion’ that proved him to be very wise: the solution of the riddle. More certainly, before Sophocles it is Aeschylus who puts on the stage all the major components of Oedipus’ tragic story. His *Oedipus* was performed at the City Dionysia in 467 BC and won the first prize—which, ironically, did not happen to Sophocles’ play, *pace* Aristotle.²¹ It was performed as a part of a tetralogy consisting of *Laius*, *Seven at Thebes* and a satyr play entitled *Sphinx*.²² As is well known, of this tetralogy only *Seven at Thebes* survived entirely. In this tragedy there is a mention both of Apollo’s oracle to Laius, which is charged with a political overtone, and of Laius’ transgression of that oracle (ll. 745–55). Referring to Laius’ transgression of Apollo’s command, the chorus says that its retribution will remain even into the third generation “ever since Laius, in defiance of Apollo who at his Pythian oracle [...] said that the

19 Fowler (2013) 404–5.

20 See, also, Statius *Thebaid* 1. 47–52, on which below, 180.

21 As is well known, Aristotle considered, and discussed, Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* as the ‘perfect’ tragedy: *Poetics* 1453ab30–3 (cf. with 1452a24–33; 1455a18). For a concise, yet accurate discussion, see Woodruff (2014) III: 1272; see, also, White (1992), and below, n. 28. Notoriously, Sophocles’ tetralogy which includes this masterpiece came second; yet it seems that at the Dionysia Sophocles won a large number of victories (about eighteen), according to a remain of an inscription (*IG ii² 2325*) recording the number of victories won by leading comic and tragic poets and actors from the 5th century on. Sophocles’ number is unmatched by any playwrights on this list: see Wright (2012) 583–4.

22 On Aeschylus’ Theban tetralogy, with a particular reference to *Oedipus*, whose plot is mostly assumed on the basis of the 2nd stasimon of *Seven at Thebes* (720–91), see in particular Deforge (1999); Bizzarri (2014) 22–4.

king would save his city if he died without offspring.” (Aeschylus, *Seven at Thebes* 742–5). The allusion is to the eventual fall of the kingdom of Thebes with the demise of Oedipus, after discovering the truth, and the fratricide strife. As for *Laius*, the first of the trilogy, a major theme seems to have been the homosexual rape of Crysippus, son of Laius’ host Pelops, and Pelops’ subsequent curse against Laius, which also set in motion the ‘tragedy’ of Oedipus.²³ As for *Oedipus*, it seems that it included: (a) the basic backstory of Sophocles’ play (the solution of the riddle and thus the liberation of Thebes from the Sphinx, the acquisition of the kingdom and the marriage with Jocasta), (b) some components of Sophocles’ plot (in particular, the discovery of his misfortune and self-blinding), and (c) one of Oedipus’ curses against his sons for having been mistreated by them, a curse that finds its fulfillment in *Seven at Thebes*. In Aeschylus’ *Oedipus*, interestingly, the place where Laius’ murder occurred seems to differ from the one reported in Sophocles. Likely in Aeschylus Oedipus met and killed Laius when he was not on the road from Thebes to Delphi (cf. Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 733–4), but on the road from Thebes to the Mountain Cithaeron,²⁴ where there was a temple dedicated to Hera *Gamostolos* (“of the wedding gown”). Laius needed to appease the goddess who, in her role as *Gamostolos*,²⁵ sent the Sphinx to punish the Thebans for their tolerance of Laius’ crime against Crysippus. This would be consistent with the scholium to Euripides’ *Phoenician Women* 1760 and a *Hypothesis* of Aeschylus’ *Seven at Thebes*,²⁶ according to which Laius was responsible for all the evils and misfortune of Thebes because of his sexual transgression. This view of the whole story might be interpreted as the product of Aeschylus’ adaptation of Oedipus’ myth in such a way that it fits his ‘tragic model’ of the chain of sin and guilt (namely, the ancestor/father’s sin and guilt) which rages through three generations, as it is exemplified by his masterpiece, *Oresteia*.

Beyond any doubt, Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* is ‘the one’, i.e., the tragedy that has imprinted its *sphragis* on the survival of Oedipus’ character and story ever since its first performance at the City Dionysia in Athens, in the second half

23 See, e.g., Deforge (1999) 30–1. About Laius’ violation of Chrysippus, see Pisander, *FgrHist*, 16 F 10 (on which Davies [2015] 4–5); Apollodorus, *Library* 3.5.8; on the episode, also Bettini/Guidorizzi (2004) 47–9; Davies (2015) 7–8.

24 Regarding this, see Deforge (1991) 28–9; Bizzarri (2014) 23 with n. 47.

25 See Lloyd-Jones (2002) 9.

26 For the specifics see Deforge (1999) 30.

of the 5th century BC.²⁷ Although, starting already from the mid-4th century BC, Aristotle's well-known and very influential comment on Sophocles' play has forever secured for *Oedipus the King* the status of the best type of tragedy,²⁸ it should be safe to say that, even without the philosopher's remark, one can realize and appreciate the masterly 'Oedipus aedifice' that Sophocles built by selecting and shaping the varied and scattered components of the story in such a way that he ended up with the majestic structure and meaning that *Oedipus the King* features. Despite their multifarious nature, out of which duality often prevails, both the character and the play are molded out of a remarkable close-knit unity which is recomposed step by step, as the tragedy unfolds on the stage.

The tragic story of Oedipus as elaborated by Sophocles is the story of a journey—metaphorically speaking—of self-discovery, wherein the hero confronts his true identity. And the tragedy in itself is the unexpectedly terrible result of that discovery. Oedipus discovers himself to be exactly the one he has tried, with all his might, to avoid becoming: the incestuous husband of his mother and the murderer of his father (*Oedipus the King* 1183–5). And, it turns out, he is such as a result of an ill-fated birth, which, alongside the parricide and incest, had been predicted. His parents, Laius and Jocasta, had in fact received an oracle from Apollo according to which Laius would be killed by a child that would be born to him and Jocasta (*Oedipus the King* 711–4). Despite this oracle, Laius and Jocasta gave birth to a child, Oedipus. Soon, however, after just three days from his birth, Laius pierced Oedipus' feet, which remain swollen forever,²⁹ and gave him to a servant to be abandoned to death on the Mount Cithaeron (*Oedipus the King* 717–9). By doing so Laius was hoping he could circumvent Apollo's prophecy. But, taking pity upon the child, the servant gave him to a shepherd from Corinth, whom he has met on the mountain. This shepherd in turn brought the child to his king and queen, Polybus and Merope, who adopted him (*Oedipus the King* 1009–1180). Oedipus thus grew up as the son of Corinth's royal couple. One day, on the occasion of a ban-

27 The exact date of the first production of this play is unknown. Scholars have generally proposed two time frames, i.e., 430–425 BC (with 426–425 being preferred), and 414–411 BC. For an overview of the arguments supporting, and contrasting with, each time frame see Lauriola (2000) 25–7 and Macintosh (2009) 7–9, both with further bibliography.

28 For the related references to Aristotle's *Poetics* and bibliography, see above, n. 21. I should add here that Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* is already explicitly mentioned as a classic tragedy by the rhetor and literary critic Pseudo Longinus (1st century AD) in his treatise *On the Sublime* (esp. 33.5 cf. with 23.3 and 15.7).

29 This is an important detail in that the physical imperfection of the feet, subsequent to Laius' action, becomes the main hallmark of Oedipus' identity to a point that it determined his name: for a full discussion, see below, 160–1.

quet, a drunken man aroused Oedipus' suspicion about his own parentage as he called him a bastard, "not {his} father's son" (*Oedipus the King* 776–80). After this insinuation, not content with his (adoptive) parents' reassurance, Oedipus decided to go to the oracle of Apollo in Delphi and to ask the god the truth concerning his origin. Apollo's oracle did not clarify anything about his origin; the only answer was a prophecy: he would kill his father and marry his mother. Believing that Polybus and Merope were his parents and determined to avoid what destiny had reserved for him, Oedipus decided not to go back to Corinth. But it is exactly in this way that, unawares, he set in motion a chain of events that will lead him to fulfill that destiny. In his wandering he arrived at a crossroad where he met Laius, who was traveling to Delphi with a chariot and some servants. The two engaged in a quarrel over who had the right of way. In the ensuing fight Oedipus killed Laius, not knowing he was his real father. Going ahead on his way, Oedipus arrived in Thebes, which turned out to be afflicted by a winged monster, with a lion's body and a woman's head and breast: the Sphinx. Perched on a rock near the city, the Sphinx had been killing anyone who was unable to solve her riddle.³⁰ Oedipus succeeded in solving the Sphinx' riddle, thus saving the city from her depravations. There was a proclamation by Creon, brother of Jocasta, according to which he would give the scepter of Thebes and wed Jocasta to anyone who would solve the riddle (Euripides, *Phoenician Women* 47–50). So this happened, and Oedipus married his mother, once again unaware that he was fulfilling his destiny.

These are the fundamental prior events that constitute the terrible truth that Oedipus eventually came to discover about himself. In Sophocles' tragedy these events are not recounted in this linear sequence. They are recalled as flashbacks by different characters, including Oedipus, and constitute the steps of an investigation that Oedipus sets up in order to find the murderer of Laius. This investigation itself, the way in which it is conducted by Oedipus, and its final result and consequences (the self-blinding of Oedipus and the suicide of Jocasta) constitute the very plot of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. The Sophoclean tragedy *per se* opens with a supplication by the people of Thebes at the palace of Oedipus. Through their priest they ask Oedipus to do something to liberate the city from the pestilence that is decimating the population.

30 As hinted at above, this hybrid creature was sent by the goddess Hera to punish the Theban community for the crime that their king Laius had committed in the past, i.e., the rape of Chrysippus: see above, 155 with n. 23. According to a less common tradition the Sphinx was sent by Ares to get revenge on the Thebans for the killing of his son, the dragon, by Cadmus—the founder and first king of Thebes: see Fonterose (1959) 310.

Oedipus, diligent king-father (e.g., *Oedipus the King* 1, 6, 58),³¹ has already taken the initiative: he sent Creon to Delphi to ask Apollo what to do to eliminate the plague. Apollo's response promotes the investigation: the unpunished murder of Laius is the cause of the community's pollution; therefore, finding the murderer and punishing him is the only way to save Thebes (*Oedipus the King* 1–150). Promptly, as if Laius were his father—as ironically he says (ll. 264–5)—Oedipus undertakes the investigation, first by asking the seer Tiresias' help: who better than a seer can give Oedipus some clues about the mysterious murderer? But, it is not Oedipus' destiny, Tiresias specifies (ll. 376–7), to fall through the seer; Oedipus' downfall is Apollo's concern. Tiresias thus refuses to help the king who, not having, in this phase, any 'data' to fully understand the truth that Tiresias cryptically reveals,³² can only draw one possible, logical conclusion: Tiresias knows it well, but does not want to speak because of a conspiracy against the king (*Oedipus the King* 378–89).³³ He is covering someone else—Oedipus thinks—who aims at Thebes' throne: Creon. Vainly Oedipus interrogates Creon, just to end up in a 'no-way-out' situation (ll. 572–630).³⁴ The *ad hoc*

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- 31 "My children" are the very first words that Oedipus utters in the *incipit* of the very first line of the play, which, already at this early stage of the story, ironically defines both Oedipus' person *per se* and his attitude toward his people: the word is one pertaining to the family ties that he, who feels as a protective father, will destroy both on the public level, as the whole Theban community/family will eventually collapse, and on the private one.
- 32 Indeed Tiresias clearly says that the killer for whom Oedipus is looking is there in Thebes; he is a foreign resident in name only, but, in fact, is Theban-born (ll. 441–55) and will be revealed as living with his children as brother and father at once, son and husband of the woman who gave him birth, and his father's murderer (ll. 457–60; cf. also ll. 366–70).
- 33 Conspiracy seems to be a typical fear of kings / tyrants / absolute rulers, concerned as they are to preserve their power and save it from the envy of others. Power and wealth are usually seen as the conspiracy's trigger, as they make the ruler enviable (see, e.g., ll. 380–9). Rulers were indeed portrayed as in the grip of fears and suspicions, and, consequently, as unhappier than ordinary people: see, e.g., *Oedipus the King* 584–94 (on which, below n. 34); Euripides, *Ion* 621–8; Xenophon, *Hiero*; Plutarchus, *Life of Solon* 14.
- 34 Both Oedipus and Creon approach the problem with a deductive reasoning, which leads them to 'a no way out', as both of them are, in a way, right. Oedipus, at least at this stage of the tragedy, can but think that Tiresias, who knows the truth and thus should help the king to save Thebes, refuses to speak, and makes up accusations, to save Creon with whom he is involved in a plot against the king for the sake of power. Creon clearly says he is enjoying his share of power, which he has gained fearlessly from Oedipus (ll. 584–91); why therefore should he consider kinship as a better thing for him to have than the painless rule and royal power that he has already? (ll. 592–4). Logical and acceptable as this deductive reasoning might be, it cannot be understood by Oedipus; otherwise it would mean for

entry of Jocasta dismisses the *aporia* only to cause a 'fateful' change of direction in Oedipus' investigation. Oedipus' quest becomes one that will inexorably drive him to nowhere and no one but himself, i.e., to discover his own true identity.

Oedipus begins the investigation as detective and prosecutor, only to discover that he is himself the criminal; he, who initially is the subject of the quest, ends up being its very object. The unawareness of this truth is one of the basic hallmarks of Oedipus, as is his strong and deliberate will to find out the truth. Both the unawareness and the determination to find out the truth ultimately testify to his innocence, guilty though he is!. He proves to be a serious investigator as he seeks the truth regardless of his own welfare.³⁵ When, in fact, in the process of his investigation he gets hold of a suspect in the murder of Laius—still unaware that he was his father (*Oedipus the King* 843–5)—Oedipus could choose to stop his quest. On the contrary, he insists, he wants to know (ll. 843–60). And when he is close to drawing the conclusion from the threads of evidence he has gradually collected, thus recomposing his true identity, Oedipus has no hesitation to hear the terrible truth: "it must be heard," he says (ll. 1169–70). This courageous determination to know testifies to his greatness.³⁶ His determination and the tireless pursuit of the truth are a motif that Sophocles emphasizes in a masterly fashion by displaying another fundamental hallmark of Oedipus: his keen intelligence and his intellectualism. Oedipus' inquiry is not a random effort at discovering the truth, lacking in method.³⁷ He proves to possess intellectual skills by basing his course of action on two specific cognitive methods: deductive reasoning and autoptic procedure.³⁸ When Oedipus realizes that the first is not working, he shifts to the second: a further evidence of his keen intelligence.³⁹ It is thanks to his intelligence

him there is no conspiracy. Hence the *aporia* and *impasse* originate. On Oedipus' ways of knowing, see Newton (1975); Reinhardt (1979) 105–112; Vegetti (1983). For an overview of this topic, see Lauriola (2000) 104–5; 143–4; 238–9; and below, 159–60 with n. 38.

35 As Schopenhauer stated: see above, n. 7.

36 Knox (1957) 50–2.

37 Indeed, Oedipus' methodical investigation has led some scholars to relate this tragedy to modern crime novels: see Reinert (1975). On the reception of this peculiar feature of Oedipus' tragedy see below, 244–5.

38 About the deductive reasoning and the bibliography related to Oedipus' cognitive methodology, see above, n. 34. As far as the autoptic method is concerned, it characterizes the whole second half of Oedipus' investigation: the conversation with Jocasta gives him new information that must be 'tested' by hearing and seeing directly.

39 Since antiquity the name Oedipus has in fact become the antonomasia for a man of wisdom and penetration. *Non hercle intellego... Davos sum, non Oedipus*, ('I don't under-

that Oedipus, and Oedipus alone, can solve the riddle of the Sphinx. Ironically, with all his intelligence, he cannot avoid his downfall; ironically, it is the intelligence that he displayed in his encounter with the Sphinx that sets in motion the process which leads to his eventual demise.

Ironically . . . Irony is another paramount feature characterizing the tragic story of Oedipus as told by Sophocles. By irony it was precisely through his strongly determined attempt at avoiding his destiny that the hero went to encounter it: Oedipus fled Corinth to avoid committing parricide and incest, only to find himself on the road toward his real hometown, toward his real parents, toward the crimes he was doomed to fulfill. And by way of irony the quest that he, Oedipus the king, undertook for the safety of his community shifts to a quest which he, Oedipus the man, continues in order to understand who he is. Unawares it is Jocasta who causes this shift when, trying to reassure Oedipus about the obscure, threatening words of Tiresias, she makes him even more anxious by igniting Oedipus' memory of his predicted destiny and his efforts to avoid it. All (re-)starts from the mention of the crossroad, the very same place of the very same event: Laius' murder and the murder by Oedipus' hands.

The tragic irony of Oedipus' life rests upon the discrepancy between the expectation of a reality and what in reality happened.⁴⁰ This discrepancy is almost innate—one may say—for it rests upon the hero's dual being,⁴¹ which is first, and significantly, mirrored by the ambiguity of Oedipus' very name. Oedipus (Οἰδίπους) is a compound name whose first part (οἰδ-) is connected

stand . . . I am Davos, not Oedipus"), declares, not accidentally, a servant-character in the comedy *Andria* (ll. 193–5) by the Roman poet Terence (2nd century BC) to indicate his inability to understand what was asked of him; he in fact needs the other to speak plainly and not—we may add—by riddles. Although the prevailing image of Oedipus is that of a wise, intellectual man, his intellectualism has been not only debated but also questioned in several modern renditions of Oedipus' story, both in literature and art: see below, e.g., 202–3, and *passim*. For a good survey of this topic see Astier (1974) 90–1; Fusillo (1996) 32–5; Paduano (2008) 146–7; 151–2; 154–6.

40 On the stage this irony finds expression in the discrepancy between the hero's and the audience's knowledge and understanding of the real situation, with the first being partial and the second larger, if not total. This discrepancy usually results in an incongruity between what is said and what is understood, which means that what a character says very often conveys two different meanings: an implied meaning, which is the true one that only the audience could fully appreciate; and the literal meaning, which reflects the limited point of view of the character. The result is what is more technically called 'amphibology' (*amphibolia*). On the tragic irony and its linguistic effects, see, e.g., Stanford (1939) 163–73; Campbell (1969) 126–33; Paduano (1983).

41 Particular emphasis on the duality that governs Sophocles' representation of Oedipus is given by Vernant (1988) esp. 118–9.

to the Greek verb meaning 'to swell', while the second part (-πους) is the Greek word for foot. It thus can mean 'swollen foot'. He is in fact the 'swollen foot' man: "When I released you," says the Corinthian who has rescued the infant Oedipus and brought him to Corinth, "both your feet were pierced right through . . . from this chance fortune you were named the one you are" (*Oedipus the King* 1034; 1036). It is indeed this physical trait that will serve as proof for the identification of the king Oedipus with the exposed child (l. 1032). But his name suggests another meaning that refers to another essential event of his tragic life, the one that crucially contributed to the fulfillment of his destiny, thus making him the hero he is. Given that the first component οἶδ—can also be traced back to the Greek verb οἶδα, meaning 'I know', Oedipus' name suggests 'the man who knows about feet', clearly alluding to the encounter with the Sphinx.⁴²

This keen, smart 'swollen-foot-knowing about feet' man, dual and yet multifaceted in his essence, as he at once comprises all the antithetical dyads (e.g., guilt/innocent, cause of Thebes' evil/savior as being its scapegoat, detective/criminal, hunter/hunted, father/parricide, son/husband, father/brother), becomes the paradigm of the struggle of human beings against the constraints of necessity that are called 'destiny/fate' in ancient times, and which Apollo and his oracles embody in this tragedy. Yet, rather than being merely a tragedy of destiny, as it has been traditionally seen,⁴³ *Oedipus the king* is a tragedy that exemplifies such crucial issues of the human condition as human limits and the religion,⁴⁴ man's fierce struggle against forces and circumstances that can neither be controlled nor overcome with logic (as Oedipus indeed attempted), acceptance and yet not passive resignation in the face of disasters, freedom of choice and personal responsibility, and so forth. As Oedipus proves, the inevitable contrast with divine forces does not preclude freedom; on the contrary, it creates a space where extraordinary human achievements are nonetheless possible.⁴⁵ Without struggle life is not, and cannot be represented as, tragic,⁴⁶ and in the fierce struggle against necessity man can create his greatest free-

42 About the meaning of Oedipus name, see Calame (1986); also Vernant (1988) 116 who points out how Oedipus' name, through its double meaning, encompasses the character's dramatic ambiguity and duality.

43 For a criticism about this traditional interpretation, see, e.g., Paduano (2008) 16–7: without intending to dismiss such an important component, i.e., destiny, both of the ancient Greek belief system and of this specific play of Sophocles, it should be noted that the tragedy is not about Oedipus' responsibility for the parricide and incest, but rather the discovery of those events that Oedipus carried out. See also below, 162 with nn. 47, 48.

44 With reference to this, see e.g. Halliwell (1990); Parker (1999).

45 About this, see Esposito (2014) 1288–9.

46 Arrowsmith (1959) 56.

doms. Oedipus is not a puppet with whom gods play; this is not the meaning and message that Sophocles meant to convey. He is doomed to be a parricide and an incestuous husband: this, indeed, has been established even before his birth. He does not have the freedom to avoid those 'criminal' deeds. But he would have the freedom to avoid searching so ferociously for the truth: he is responsible for the discovery of his identity, a discovery that, although set in motion by the plague and by Apollo's related oracle, is the result of an investigation that Oedipus responsibly chooses to carry out until the very end, despite the obstacles and the attempts of others to get him to desist from it.⁴⁷ No one, no constraint of necessity, demands that he blind himself. This violently self-inflicted mutilation might be regarded as a free choice which Oedipus could make within the constraints of his fate, represented by Apollo's hostile oracle (*Oedipus the King* 1329–32).⁴⁸

Doomed and free to choose. This is another component of the dual and multifarious, complex character of Oedipus and his tragic story. As we shall see, however, this complexity does not always reverberate in the reception history of this play across centuries. As is typical, the selection of traits and issues has been made according to the different socio-political and cultural status both of the re-adaptor and of her/his receiving society, the risk being to minimize, and sometimes even trivialize, some of the crucial features and meanings of the play. However that may be, undeniably Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* has continued to exert interest and influence on different fields of art and knowledge, and far beyond the boundaries of the so-called Western civilization.

In the meantime, still 'looking at Oedipus' within the boundaries of the Western world and, more precisely, in his native land around the time of his debut in the Sophoclean masterpiece, and a little later, mention should be made of 5th-century Athenian comedy. With the due caution, Athenian comedy can be seen as an indicator of the audiences' contemporary reception and view of the tragedians' works. The Greek comic playwrights, *in primis* Aristophanes, in fact incorporated, and built on allusions to the tragic production of the time, and to the authors themselves, by way of parody, quotations, and trivial jokes. Aristophanes' treatment of Euripides can represent the tip of the iceberg of such a trend.⁴⁹ Strikingly, and significantly, it seems that Sophocles was immune from Aristophanes' mockery and free of his criti-

47 See Knox (1984) 143–53; Paduano (2008) 23.

48 See, e.g., Paduano (2008) 23–5; 36–8.

49 The related bibliography is very vast: a synthesis both of the theme itself and related bibliography is in Lauriola (2010) 115–26.

cism: he is, in fact, mentioned sporadically in comedy through passing references, which in general are not central to the humor, nor are they developed or adapted in the form of paratragic pastiche.⁵⁰ Besides a passing mention in *Peace* 695–9⁵¹ and in *Birds* 96–101,⁵² Sophocles is given some special space in *Frogs*: the dead Aeschylus and Euripides engage in a dramatic contest to help Dionysus decide whom he should ‘resurrect’ to save the theater (and with that, the polis: *Frogs* 1517–9). This contest involves Sophocles, too, in some way (e.g., *Frogs* 76–7; 786–7)—more precisely, in an almost unconditionally good way. Aeschylus and Euripides are indeed criticized and parodied in detail; Sophocles is just admired. What is more, with Aeschylus being chosen to go back into the upper world, the ‘throne of tragedy’ for posterity in the Underworld is given to Sophocles (and Euripides thus is doubly a loser). The generally sympathetic portrayal of Sophocles in Aristophanes and other comedians lets us infer a positive reception of *Oedipus the King* as well, to the point that it might not have been re-adapted and reworked for comic and/or invective purposes.⁵³

A play entitled *Oedipus* was also written by Euripides, probably at the very end of the 5th century BC.⁵⁴ It did not survive, and the tiny number of fragments, furthermore recently revised and put under question,⁵⁵ makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the kind of adaptation to which Euripides subjected the story, and the motifs behind his adaptation. It is, however, important first to observe that Euripides devoted another play to the story of Oedipus’ house, *Phoenician Women* (ca. 408–407 BC?), which has survived entirely. Although it deals with the internecine war between Oedipus’ sons over the throne of Thebes—i.e., the same theme put on stage, with some varia-

50 A good overview on the topic is in Wright (2012) 587–92.

51 On which Olson (1998) 210–1.

52 See Wright (2010) 589. For a list of Aristophanic passages that make some use of Sophocles, see Rau (1967) 214.

53 With this said, one should also keep in mind that much of the ancient comedic production is lost; therefore the inference suggested above must be taken *cum grano salis*.

54 The date is uncertain. On the basis of metrical evidence a date between 408 and 402–401 (with some preference for the latter) is suggested: see, e.g., Macintosh (2009) 22–3.

55 About 18 fragments survive; they correspond to *fr.* 439a–557 in Kannicht’s edition (2004), which is the one I shall refer to. These fragments have been very recently re-examined by Liapis (2014) who considers only 4 fragments as ‘probably genuine’, on account of their language and style: *fr.* 539a, 540, 554b, 556 [Liapis (2014) 309–16]. The reconstruction of the probable plot of Euripides’ *Oedipus* provided above is partly based on Liapis’ reconsideration of the surviving fragments. I shall then specify where it diverges from Liapis in the footnotes (see, e.g., below, n. 58).

tions, by Aeschylus in his *Seven at Thebes*—a comparison of its plot with some fragments of the lost *Oedipus* might shed some light on the latter.⁵⁶ One of the most certain thematic threads of Euripides' rewriting which differs from Sophocles' treatment of the story pertains to the sequence of events. It seems that some of the crucial events of the recent past of Laius' house—including Apollo's prohibition against begetting a child—were fully narrated in the prologue, probably performed by Jocasta (like in *Phoenician Women*) or by the shepherd who was given baby Oedipus to be left to die (*Fr.* 539a Kannicht). Those events would also include the encounter with the Sphinx, which is granted a remarkable space. The following enacting of Oedipus' triumphal arrival in Thebes and his marriage with the queen would therefore be grounded on the victory over the Sphinx. In Euripides the past is thus not 'recollected' through flashbacks and upon the detective work of Oedipus.⁵⁷ While detracting in a way from one of the hallmarks of Sophocles' Oedipus, i.e., his passionate search for the truth, this is consistent with another certain thematic component of Euripides' lost play, i.e., the way in which the truth comes to light: it is an unidentifiable character that reveals the truth. This innovation of Euripides' version would in turn be consistent with another significant one, should the relevant fragment actually be authentic (*Fr.* 541 Kannicht).⁵⁸ It is an innovation that would pertain both to the self blinding-motif and to the discovery of the truth. According to the fragment in question, Euripides' Oedipus did not blind himself; it was a servant of Laius who, in some way, inflicted that mutilation upon him, under Creon's command, as a punishment for the murder of Laius.⁵⁹ This means that Oedipus first comes to know about his identity as a regicide. His identity as the son of Laius and Jocasta, i.e., as a parricide and incestuous husband, would remain unknown at first, until the arrival of Oedipus' adoptive mother from Corinth, rather than a messenger, to communicate the death of Polybus.⁶⁰ Those who accept this version as authentic emphasize the subsequent political overtone that Euripides might have given to the story as he radically split the discovery of Oedipus' identity as a regicide

56 This is in particular the approach adopted by Macintosh (2009) 21–4.

57 The whole *Fr.* 540 is about the Sphinx, and it probably comes from a speech, by a messenger or Oedipus himself, that accounts for the circumstances surrounding the defeat of the Sphinx, which, here in Euripides, should belong to a very recent past: see Liapis (2014) 311–2.

58 It is a quotation-fragment that Liapis considers as likely spurious (2014: 216–40); differently, in her account, Macintosh (2009) 22–30 follows those, such as Collard, who consider it authentic: see Collard (2005) 57–62.

59 About this, see Collard (2005) 57.

60 About this variant, see Liapis (2014) 356 with n. 173.

first,⁶¹ and later—with his adoptive mother's visit—as a parricide.⁶² Therefore, Euripides' *Oedipus* would be less a tragedy about a man who ends up being the one he tried hard not to become. Considering its possible date, it would rather be a tragedy “reflecting the domestic turmoil and political skullduggery in Athens of the latter years of the Peloponnesian War,”⁶³ exactly like Euripides' other plays of that time. Euripides' *Oedipus* would likely be a play of political subterfuge and ruthlessness, with an opportunistic Creon acting as the envious would-be usurper of the throne in front of an Oedipus essentially passive—far different from the tenacious Sophoclean hero, and more similar to his ‘spectral’ presence in *Phoenician Women*. Notice should finally be taken of Jocasta's role: it seems that, like in *Phoenician Women*, the queen is granted the space to stand out as a powerful tragic character since the beginning, starting—if it is so—from the prologue. On the base of the related controversial fragments, there is no agreement about her fate, whether she committed suicide or rather shared Oedipus' exile.

Although, as already noted above, the reconstruction of Euripides' *Oedipus* remains tentative for most part, and doubts still surround some innovations, one might be tempted to see here ‘in-embryo’ the forerunners of some choices of many subsequent adapters, given that the theme of political power and/or the more active and emotional engagement of Jocasta will exert special attractiveness on them and on their audiences. The inadequacies of our evidence, however, suggest caution in that Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* might still be—as it often is—‘the direct’ palimpsest on which the following artists have re-written their version whether, in turn, under the influence of some predecessors other than Sophocles, or not. In the end, as ‘decreed’ by Aristotle,⁶⁴ Sophocles' play was to be seen as the exemplary tragedy in terms both of its plot construction and of its ability to cause specific emotional and intellectual reactions on the part of the audience, i.e., fear and pity. Against this background one would expect to detect some influence of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* on later Greek and Roman poets quite frequently, which does not happen—at least, so far as we can ascertain.⁶⁵ Judging from what has survived of the ancient literary products

61 Indeed, one of the servants of the murdered Laius, who recounts how they blinded Oedipus to punish him for murdering the king (*Fr.* 541, on which above, 164), identifies him as “the son of Polybus”.

62 About this, see also Macintosh (2009) 23–4.

63 Macintosh (2009) 23.

64 See above, nn. 21, 28.

65 About this, see Wright (2012) 592–5, on which I mainly based my discussion.

of the time after Sophocles, from the end of the 5th century BC to the Roman Imperial period (ca. 1st century BC–4th century AD), it seems that Hellenistic and Roman writers did not engage with the full body of Sophocles' tragedies; they repeatedly showed a 'selective' interest in a number of figures and stories, such as Ajax, Antigone, and the house of Atreus. Strikingly Oedipus is not in the list. The house of Laius seems not to have appealed to the Roman audience in the Republican period (ca. 509–27 BC) as well.⁶⁶ No tragedy of that period is known under the title *Oedipus*, with the exception of one by Julius Caesar (1st century BC), who is said to have written a play entitled *Oedipus* when he was "a boy, or a very young man," but, "... Augustus forbade [it] to be published, in a short and plain letter to Pompeius Macer, who was employed by him in the arrangement of his libraries," as the biographer Svetonius later stated (*Life of Caesar* 56.7). A little before Caesar, Oedipus makes an appearance in the lost tragedy *Phoenissae* ("Phoenician Women") by the Roman poet Lucius Accius (ca. 170–87 BC), who also wrote an *Antigona* ("Antigone").⁶⁷ Only about twenty lines have survived of Accius' *Phoenissae*, which suggest that the play followed very closely Euripides' homonymous tragedy. The same lack of interest in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* is to be found in the Augustan Period (ca. 27 BC–14 AD).⁶⁸ Accordingly, scholars have especially pointed out the very remarkable omission of any treatment of Oedipus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, "the bible of myth," not only for the Middle Ages and Renaissance to come, but already for the Rome of the 1st century AD.⁶⁹ Ovid, however, deals with Theban mythology, precisely in *Metamorphoses* 3 and 4. Here the narrative focuses on some individual members of the family of Cadmus, the founder of Thebes, i.e., his four daughters and their respective sons: Autonoe and the fate of her child Actaeon, Semele and her son Dionysus, Agave and Pentheus, and Ino and her son Melicertes.⁷⁰ It should be noted that Greek drama, which typically informs Ovid's poem, staged Thebes' story by usually employing three main clusters of myth: (1) the events related to the arrival of Cadmus in Boeotia and his founding of Thebes, (2) the myth of the house of Laius, in particular the story of Oedipus, and (3) the myth of the conception and birth of Dionysus from

66 See, e.g., Caviglia (1986); more in general about Sophocles in Rome, see Holford-Strevens (1999).

67 Caviglia (1986) 255 and n. 1. On Accius' *Phoenissae*, see, e.g., Warmington (1936) 524–31; Frank (1995) 25–7.

68 An exception is represented by the highly popular theatrical genre of the period, i.e., the pantomina, which includes at least one *Oedipus*: see Macintosh (2009) 36.

69 Hinds (2011) 9.

70 See Gildenhard/Zissos (2000). My discussion is much in debt to this work.

Semele, and his confrontation with his cousin Pentheus upon the god's return to Thebes.⁷¹ Not only does Ovid exclude such an important segment of Theban mythology as the myth of the house of Laius (2),⁷² but he also introduces a story that seems to be at odds with the narrative context of *Metamorphoses* 3 and 4: the story of Echo and Narcissus (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3. 339–510). In recent decades, scholars have attempted to demonstrate that the stories that Ovid does include in his 'Theban history' gesture thematically towards Sophocles' Oedipus "as their absent centre and reference-point".⁷³ This would imply that Ovid has in some way re-adapted Sophocles' story even without explicitly telling it. The 'strange' inclusion of Narcissus has been singled out to support this argument:⁷⁴ through Narcissus the poet would "render vicariously the thematic complex of Oedipus by relating his Narcissus tale to the most powerful representation of Oedipus' fate, Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*." Ovid would operate a Narcissistic adaptation of the Sophoclean play through a complex range of intertextual correspondences, once a connection between the two figures is established. The introduction of the seer Tiresias where the sequence of the Theban myths calls for the entrance of Oedipus' story (or, better say, of all the Labdacides), i.e., immediately before the 'at-odds' inclusion of Narcissus (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3. 316–38), would signal both the connection between Oedipus and Narcissus and the transference of meaning from Sophocles' play into Ovid's poem. Not only, in fact, is Tiresias the well-known seer of Thebes regularly present in Greek drama, but he is 'the' seer of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* in particular, who also plays a role in the story of Narcissus (see, e.g., *Metamorphoses* 3. 348–51).⁷⁵ Upon this connection Ovid establishes the transference of meaning in that the contrast between Sophocles' embittered Tiresias and the Ovidian expert-on-sexuality Tiresias signals the translation of tragic subject matter into the sphere of the erotic, i.e., the sphere of

71 Zeitlin (1986) 130 n. 9.

72 The epithet *Oedipodioniae* ("of Oedipus": *Metamorphoses* 15. 429), by which Thebes is connoted, is in fact the only allusion to Oedipus' connection with Theban mythology.

73 Hinds (2011) 10. Regarding this, see, also, Loewenstein (1984) 33–56; Hardie (1988) 86.

74 The quotation is from Gildenhard/Zissos (2000) 131. Hinds (2011) 10–3 further supports the reading of these scholars by highlighting a connection with a choral ode of Seneca's *Oedipus* (709–63) which they missed. More generally on Ovid's peculiar treatment of the Theban tragic story, which "promotes the view of the city as the paradigmatic *locus tragicus*," see, Mira Seo (2013) 105–6 with n. 20.

75 Consulted by Narcissus' mother as to whether her child would live a long live, interestingly Tiresias replies, "if he does not discover himself." I would think that this trait might potentially evoke a connection with Oedipus, whose self-discovery in a way sealed his death.

the Narcissus figure. The plot-structure of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and Ovid's Narcissus-narrative indeed involves striking correspondences, as both poets conform to the Aristotelian standards for tragic quality. In each story, in fact, there is both *anagnorisis*, i.e., the recognition consisting of a change from (self-)ignorance to (self-)knowledge, and *peripeteia*, i.e., the reversal of the character's fortune.⁷⁶ What is more, in each stories the moment of recognition coincides with the plot's reversal. In both stories, recognition and reversal rest upon the fact that either character is at the center of two different worlds: one which they 'create' by and for themselves, believing that that is their world, which instead turns out to be illusory; the other is the real one, which ultimately will annihilate them once they enter it.⁷⁷ Inverse variations complement these and other correspondences in a way that the two might be seen as thematic mirror reflections of each other: where, for instance, the basic duality of Oedipus' person is embedded within the wider structure of his family—as he is husband and son to his father's wife, father and brother to his mother's children—that of Narcissus is embedded within himself, as he is lover and beloved (of and by himself) at the same time; where Oedipus' personal catastrophe involves a wider network of political implications, that of Narcissus represents a drama of self-absorbing love. Resting upon such inverse mimetic correlations, along with the correspondences, Ovid's Narcissistic adaptation of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* consists of a 'drama' where Narcissus reenacts the plot structure, the thematic concerns, and the destiny of his tragic alter ego within the sphere of the erotic and the codes of erotic-elegiac discourse. At the same time, by way of intertextual allusion, it reintegrates the basic story of Laius' house without disrupting the poet's concern with Cadmus' house.

Ovid's engagement with the 'absent' Sophoclean Oedipus is, however, not to be confined to the Narcissus interlude. As we shall see, it can be also detected in the actual Theban myths that he retold in his 'Theban history', in particular in Actaeon's myth, as it constitutes the setting of a specific choral ode of the later Seneca's *Oedipus*. It remains a fact that Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* did not enjoy much success at the time of August's empire. It was Neronian Rome which displayed a special engagement with this tragedy. The socio-political context certainly played a part in this revival of interest in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, as incest and licentious, endogamous marriages were almost 'on the agenda'. Contemporary historians, mainly Tacitus (ca. 56–117 AD) and, a bit later, Svetonius (ca. 69–122 AD), often hint with shock

76 On the related Aristotelian passages, see above, nn. 21, 28.

77 Furthermore, this and all the inherent dualities of both figures reverberate on the level of language. Regarding this, for Sophocles, see above, n. 40; for Ovid, see Rosati (1983).

at those scandalous customs in which the Julio-Claudian dynasty engaged. The emperor Claudius, for instance, married his brother's daughter, Agrippina, thus becoming the adoptive father of Nero; and Nero married Octavia, who was the daughter of his adoptive father Claudius. Furthermore, Nero and his mother Agrippina engaged themselves in a far more questionable relationship, whether for lust (in the case of Nero) or for political ambitions (in the case of his mother Agrippina). Tacitus' account pictures well the awful lay of the land:

Cluvius⁷⁸ relates that Agrippina in her eagerness to secure her own power [over Nero] went so far that at midday, when at that time Nero was beginning to experience the warmth of wine and feasting, she presented herself on several occasions to her half-drunken son, attractively dressed and prepared for incest; and that when their intimates observed lascivious kisses and caresses, [...], Seneca sought a female's antidote to a woman's fascinations, and hurried in the freedwoman Acte,⁷⁹ who, alarmed as she was both at her own danger and at Nero's disgrace, was to tell him that the incest was common knowledge, since his mother boasted of it, and that the soldiers would not submit to the rule of an impious emperor. Fabius Rusticus reports that not Agrippina, but Nero, lusted for the union,⁸⁰ the scheme being frustrated by the astuteness of that same freedwoman.

(Tacitus, *Annales* ["Annals"] 14.2).

An association of Nero with the *par excellence* incestuous tragic hero would come with no surprise, considering the notorious 'dramatic' hobby of this emperor.⁸¹ He is in fact reported to have taken the part of Oedipus on several occasions. It seems that he performed the role of Oedipus through two tragedies by the title of *Oedipus Excaecatus* ("Oedipus blinded," cf. Svetonius, *Life of Nero* 21.3) and *Oedipus Exul* ("Oedipus in Exile," cf. Svetonius, *Life of Nero* 46.3). As

78 Marcus Cluvius Rufus was a Roman consul, senator, governor, and an important historian contemporary of the emperors Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. Very little is known about his work except that it related to events during the reign of these emperors.

79 Acte was a slave whose beauty captivated Nero to the point that he freed her, and became very much attached to her. About this interference by Seneca, see below, 171 with n. 87.

80 This is also confirmed by Svetonius, *Life of Nero* 28: writing at length of Nero's debauchery, the historian reports that the emperor's lust for incestuous relations with his mother was universally believed, above all after he added to his concubines a prostitute who was said to have a strong resemblance to Agrippina.

81 See, e.g., Curley (1986) 102–3. Likewise, some associations have been made between Jocasta and Agrippina: regarding this, see below, 175–6.

for the latter, according to Svetonius' report, in his last days, haunted by fear as he was, Nero completely identified himself and his 'fate' with Oedipus:

It was likewise reported that the last tragic piece which he sung was *Oedipus in Exile*, and that he fell as he was repeating this line: "θανεῖν μ' ἄνωγε σύγγαμος, μήτηρ, πατήρ" "Wife, mother, father, force me to death" (Svetonius, *Life of Nero* 46.3).⁸²

On a parodic level two passages of the *Satyricon* by the writer Gaius Petronius Arbiter (1st century AD), contemporary of Seneca, testify to the 'resurrected' interest of the time in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, and, perhaps more importantly, confirm how the current *mores*, well exemplified by the emperor, have affected the reception of this Sophoclean play in a way that it produced an almost unilateral reading focused on the incest motif. In Petronius' novel the narrator Encolpius twice parodies Oedipus:⁸³ in *Satyricon* 132.4, finding himself rejected in love, and threatening his impotent member with castration, Encolpius remarks: "Don't some tragic heroes castigate their eyes...?"; and in *Satyricon* 137.3, Encolpius is said to discover that the killing of an annoying goose can cause the same outbreak of public anger and disapproval as the crime of parricide itself. In the first passage an allusion to Oedipus is apparent: the association between Oedipus' self blinding—upon the discovery of his parricide and incestuous marriage—and Encolpius' intended act of castration gestures towards the incest, if one considers both the erotic context and the cause of that intended act, i.e., impotency. The same might be inferred from the second passage where the allusion to Oedipus is not so transparent, but can be detected through the symbolic meaning of the goose: it is a symbol of sexual potency, love, and conjugal fidelity.⁸⁴ Killing a goose, in that context, means killing sexual potency and the annihilation of conjugal love; the comparison with the parricide specifically would imply metaphorical castration—thus interruption of conjugal love. All of this seems to gesture towards a complex net of allusions to Oedipus with the incest/sexual implication being prominent.

82 Cf. Dio Cassius *Historia Romana* 68. 28. 4–5.

83 See Macintosh (2009) 36–7.

84 As far as the symbolism of geese as loving and extremely faithful mates is concerned, see, e.g., Kretschmer (1945), who argued that Penelope, the proverbial faithful wife, is a *nom parlant* ("name that speaks for itself) on the ground of its possible derivation from *penelops*, which was a water bird or a duck, often associated with geese. Further discussion about this possible connection is provided by Levaniouk (2011).

Mutatus ordo est, sede nil propria iacet / sed acta retro versa . . . natura
versa est; nulla lex utero manet

The position has been changed, nothing lies in its own place/ but all
things *are reversed* . . . Nature is subverted, and the womb does not fol-
lows any of its laws

(Seneca, *Oedipus* 366–71)

By these words, Tiresias' daughter, Manto, one of the new characters that the Roman writer and philosopher Seneca (ca. 1st century AD) adds to the cast of his *Oedipus*, describes the *sacri signa fatidici* ("the tokens of the prophetic sacrifice", l. 302), a subsidiary tool that Seneca puts in the hands of his Romanized seer so that he may decipher Apollo's oracle pertaining to the healing of Thebes from the plague (ll. 293–383).⁸⁵ Confusion and disarrangement mark the obscure results of Manto's analysis of each component of the sacrifice: from the fire (pyromancy) to the sacrificial animals (a bull and a heifer), from their entrails to specifically—and significantly—a fetus of one of them (the heifer), which does not lie in accustomed fashion, but in an unnatural place in its mother's body (ll. 373–5). Obscure though it may seem to be, the sacrifice certainly alludes to the familial chaos that characterizes the house of Oedipus, whose incestuous marriage has annihilated the kinship's proper boundaries.⁸⁶ In perfect line both with the issues of Neronian Rome, as described above, and with the peculiar position of Seneca in the emperor's entourage,⁸⁷ Seneca's *Oedipus* seems to grant some prominence to the incest theme. As it will be seen, since the very beginning, this theme is evoked, whether allusively or not, in the drama's crucial phases, which constitutes another among

85 About this 'romanized' scene of the sacrifice with the new, additional character of Manto, Tiresias' daughter, see below, 177–8.

86 Regarding this interpretation, see, in particular, Bettini (1983) 194; also below, 173–5 with n. 105.

87 As is well known, Seneca was Nero's tutor and adviser: see, e.g., Boyle (2006) 191. Vainly, whether through his philosophical treatise or through his tragedies, he tried to restrain him from giving way to his inclinations to violence, abuse of power, lust, and more. As far as Seneca's focus on the incest theme is concerned, in particular Thummer (1972) esp. 195 ascribed it to Seneca's political role at Nero's court. However, some scholars suggest more caution; a reading of Seneca's *Oedipus* as a play written specifically with pedagogical purposes to keep the emperor away from his incestuous temptations would be too simplistic: see, e.g., Caviglia (1986) 267–9; Degl'Innocenti Pierini (2012) 112–4.

the several innovative features of Seneca's adaptation.⁸⁸ The play opens with a long monologue by Oedipus himself (ll. 1–81), who is far different from his Sophoclean prototype:⁸⁹ not a king-father with a sincere concern for his community's safety, but rather a self-centered king who is preoccupied with being the cause of the current evils, which still manifest themselves in the form of a pestilence. His preoccupation revolves around himself, his loss of a past happiness for having come upon a kingdom by chance (Seneca, *Oedipus* 14),⁹⁰ and now being thus forced to endure the burden of such a deceitful good as the scepter (ll. 5–13). This Oedipus is *memor* ("mindful") of an oracle he received from Apollo and tried to overcome by happily escaping his 'father's scepter, i.e., Polybus' house. Differently from Sophocles' Oedipus, at the beginning *immemor* ("forgetful") of that same oracle,⁹¹ and happy to be king, Seneca's Oedipus is obsessed by the fear that, impossible though it might be, he still can make that oracle true (ll. 25–6).⁹² His concern that he might be the cause of the present pollution comes from his awareness that he dared to overcome his destiny rather than accept, and submit to, it. Now he is paying the consequences: how could he think he would be given a prosperous and carefree good such as a healthy kingdom, after all? (ll. 34–6). Significantly, while remembering the

88 It should be noted that some scholars have doubted that the main and direct source of Seneca's *Oedipus* was Sophocles, as they believe that the differences between the two plays are not a result of Seneca's innovative adaptation of the Greek model, they are rather due to the fact that Seneca used other sources than Sophocles: for a concise discussion of this issue with further bibliography, see Palmieri (1989) 177–8 n. 9.

89 Regarding the far different characterization of Seneca's Oedipus, compared to his Greek model, among others see, e.g., Caviglia (1986); Curley (1986); Macintosh (2009) esp. 42–4; Paduano (2008) esp. 81–7; Degl'Innocenti Pierini (2012) esp. 89–106; Mira Seo (2013) 96–7.

90 *In regnum incidi* ("onto a kingdom I stumbled") Oedipus, indeed, laments in the prologue, such an ironic utterance that he picked up at the end, after the discovery of the truth, when he hurries himself to the exile, but *siste—ne in matrem incidas* ("wait! Lest you stumble on your mother," 1051).

91 In Sophocles, in fact, Oedipus remembers and speaks of that oracle only when, after Jocasta's mention of the crossroad where Laius was killed, he tells his own story to her, i.e., how it happened that he arrived in Thebes, and what had happened along the way to Thebes: Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 726–815. About this peculiar difference, see Caviglia (1986) 262–3.

92 Regarding Oedipus' almost obsessive memory and fear of the oracle, the content of the ban which Oedipus proclaims is *ironically* relevant as he curses Laius' murderer by wishing him to become 'an Oedipus', i.e., to fulfill his own fearsome oracle: "[...] over shameful marriage and impious progeny may he lament; may he, too, kill his own father with his own hand and do [...] whatever I have fled from" (ll. 260–3). The obsession drives him to consciously make himself the center of the ban: about this, see Caviglia (1986) 261; Paduano (1995) 15–6; 60 n. 59.

content of the oracle, this Oedipus emphasizes, in a way, the incest by considering it as *maius scelus* and *nefas* ("greater crime and wickedness") than the parricide (*Oedipus* 15–8),⁹³ and, in doing so, by showing some kind of reticence in naming it, which conveys an uneasy feeling of *pudor*—a feeling often linked to sexual chastity (ll. 19–20). What is more to my mind, the motif of confusion and chaos as a metonymy for incest—which later informs the scene of the sacrifice and highlights the horror of this *scelus*—already emerges in Oedipus' opening monologue and already charges the incest-theme itself with an apocalyptic tone as Oedipus' domestic chaos reverberates across the cosmos. In the monologue, the plague is in fact described as something that turns nature upside down (ll. 36–56).⁹⁴ *In tuto tua, / natura, posui iura* ("O Nature, I made your laws secure," ll. 24–5), Oedipus says in explaining his (vain) flight from Corinth, thus trying to avoid the unnatural relation with his mother. *Natura versa est* ("Nature is subverted," l. 371), cries a horrified Manto when, according to her interpretation of the results of the sacrifice, they symbolically reveal the confusion and chaos caused by incest in the natural order of the world as well. At the end, once Oedipus realizes his identity as incestuous husband, he again invokes Nature—as in the beginning—whose laws and order he has 'messed up' despite all his good intentions, to the point that it has produced 'uncommon births':

illa quae leges ratas / Natura in uno vertit Oedipoda, novos / commenta
partus, supplicis eadem meis / novetur

Let that same Nature, which in Oedipus alone reversed her own established laws and produced strange births, be changed anew for my punishment

(Seneca, *Oedipus* 942–5)

Although post-posted to his apprehension about his doomed life, from the outset this Oedipus highlights a motif which is crucial to Seneca as philosopher and poet: rule, or, more broadly, political power.⁹⁵ To Seneca' eyes, political

93 "They [sc. Delphic laurels] another greater crime (*maius scelus*) assign to me," Oedipus indeed complains after mentioning the warning he received about murdering his own father (ll. 15–6), and continues, "is there any wickedness more unspeakable (*maius scelus*) than killing one's own father?" (ll. 17–18).

94 Regarding the apocalyptic tone see, e.g. Degl'Innocenti Pierini (2012) 96–8.

95 With reference to this motif, through the analysis of the occurrences of terms pertaining to kingship (e.g., *regnum/regnare, rex. Regius/regalis* etc.), Mantovanelli (2012: 115–7 with

power is the quintessence of evil, both done and suffered,⁹⁶ such a perception that only results from his reflection on, and observation of, the contemporary socio-political context—along with his philosophical credo. Atreus' words in *Thyestes* 312–3 might well illuminate Seneca's negative conception of rule: in answer to the attendant who tries to restrain him from his evil plan, arguing that, in doing so, he will give a bad lesson to his young sons, Atreus says: "Power will teach them treachery and crime, without any lessons from me" (also cf. Seneca, *Phoenician Women* 645–6). Indeed, deprived of all the beneficial connotations which in Sophocles characterize Oedipus' perception of his own position as ruler, for Seneca's Oedipus, rule is some sort of 'punishment' which he accidentally incurred, a masqueraded misfortune,⁹⁷ for rule, and all the possible advantages it implies, is a *fallax bonum* ("a deceitful good," *Oedipus* 5). Oedipus, i.e., Seneca behind him, knows well that whatever is eminent is then surely struck down by an envious god or fortune, and those who enjoy good fortune always live with anxiety and fear, the fear of sudden reversal.⁹⁸

Far from being a dynamic king who takes immediate initiative to cope with the crisis of his people, this Oedipus even 'politically' is concerned with himself only. "Kings especially must guard the life of kings" (l. 242), Oedipus in fact says when he delivers the interdiction against the murderer of Laius—who has still to be found—upon Creon's report of Apollo's response to the query that, like in Sophocles, sets in motion the discovery of the truth, i.e., the query of how to heal Thebes from the pestilence. It is not really, or, at least, primarily, for the community's wellbeing that Oedipus launches the interdiction; it is out of fear for his own safety, the fear of regicide.⁹⁹ Overwhelming as it is, this fear of Seneca's Oedipus also involves a paramount hallmark of Sophocles' Oedipus: the eagerness and determination to know. Never is Sophocles' Oedipus scared to know; Seneca's, on the contrary, vacillates before hearing Apollo's response from Creon (*Oedipus* 206–9).¹⁰⁰ Indeed, Seneca's play does not strictly resemble the painful quest for self-knowledge: power and, far more heavily, familial chaos (incest) seem to be the focal points of Seneca's rewriting. Accordingly, Seneca's

n. 4) argues that, out of all of Seneca's tragedies, *Oedipus* is second only to *Thyestes*, the *par excellence* tragedy about tyrannical power.

96 Paduano (1995) 8–9.

97 See Schetter (1968).

98 See, e.g., *Oedipus* 7–10; cf. with Seneca, *Agamemnon* 5–60. Power and mutability of fortune are motifs regularly occurring in Seneca tragedies: a list of the occurrences of these motifs in his plays and prose works is in Boyle (2011) 189.

99 About this kind of fear as typically felt by absolute ruler, see above, n. 33.

100 But, cf. l. 551.

Oedipus has little, if anything at all, of the ‘intellectualism’ and brilliant keenness of Sophocles’ counterpart: the encounter with the Sphinx is one that involves brawn rather than brain (ll. 92–109). Only once is his ‘proverbial’ *ingenium* evoked: *utere ingenio, miser* (“use your intelligence,” l. 947) Oedipus says to himself when he ponders what kind of punishment he should self-inflict.

Like Sophocles’ Oedipus, Seneca’s is innocent as well: *Fati ista culpa est: nemo fit fato nocens* (“This of yours is destiny’s fault: no one can be guilty for his own fate,” l. 1019) Jocasta says when the tragedy is about to end.¹⁰¹

In contrast with this passive, pessimistic Oedipus, always oppressed and paralyzed-by fear, Seneca’s Jocasta is a more dynamic one than Sophocles’. Not only is she granted more prominence than in Sophocles, but her presence significantly marks the beginning and the end of the play: she enters immediately after Oedipus’ monologue to ‘awake’ him from his passivity, by reminding him of his duties as a king, thus contributing to highlighting the rule-motif (ll. 82–6);¹⁰² and, perhaps more significantly, she appears at the end, after Oedipus has already blinded himself,¹⁰³ sealing the tragedy both with words and with an action that put the incest motif in the spotlight once again, once and for all.¹⁰⁴ The destabilizing familial chaos is conveyed through the confusion of the family nomenclature:¹⁰⁵ “How should I call you? Son?” (*Oedipus* 1009–10), Jocasta cries as she enters the stage for the last time. And: “Let me seize his sword; by this sword lies dead my / husband—why call him with a false name? / [I should say] my father-in-law?” (ll. 1034–6), she cries to herself, thus calling attention on the incest in the moment in which she re-enacts onstage the incestuous union through the way she decides to kill herself, i.e., by stabbing herself in the womb, that same womb which bore her husband-son and their sons (ll. 1038–9).

¹⁰¹ For a reading emphasizing the motif of the power of Fate, see Mantovanelli (2012).

¹⁰² A slight parallel could be found in Jocasta’s intervention in Sophocles’ play that interrupts, at an appropriate time, the quarrel between Oedipus and Creon (cf. Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 634–8), with the big difference being the fact that Sophocles’ Jocasta reminds Oedipus of the community’s *salus*-issue, differently from Seneca’s Jocasta, who makes it an occasion for a laconic, and stoic-based, statement on the matter of reigning.

¹⁰³ Along with the sacrifice scene with Tiresias’ daughter’s intervention and the necromancy scene (see below, 177), this is certainly one of the most important innovations, which will be found, at times, in the following adaptations as well. As far as the differences between Sophocles’ and Seneca’s plays, see Thummer 1972, and Palmieri (1983) 115–64, for a full, attentive analysis.

¹⁰⁴ About this, see, also, Macintosh (2009) 41.

¹⁰⁵ Regarding this confusion involving family names, which is to be found in Seneca, *Phoenician Women* 134–7 as well, see also Boyle (2011) 349–50.

In a gesture that parallels other Senecan stoic suicides,¹⁰⁶ Jocasta punishes her *incesta anima* (“incestuous/impious spirit,” l. 1026), for which—as she restates until the very end—*omne confusum perit* [...] *iuris humani decus* (“all dignity of human law is confused and lost,” l. 1025); hers is an extreme attempt to erase every trace of the physical relationship and thus to ‘redeem’ herself. Jocasta’s gesture is also said to parallel the suicide of Agrippina, Nero’s mother,¹⁰⁷ as reported by the historian Tacitus (*Annales* [“Annals”] 14.8.5).

The contemporary rumors about an incestuous passion between the two, whether only attempted by Agrippina for the sake of power, or desired by Nero out of real lust for the union,¹⁰⁸ might have played some role in the way, and the reasons behind it, in which Seneca has reshaped this tragedy, although we should always exercise caution and take into account some differences between literary fiction and specific realities.¹⁰⁹ Certainly incest does feature as a main concern of this play, which might reflect a current preoccupation with the purity of the male bloodline, such a preoccupation that, in Roman Law, finds parallels in the increasing emphasis on the crime of incest.¹¹⁰ The purity of the male line of descent was essential to maintain its dignity, and incest was punished even with violent death.¹¹¹ In a closer reading, the theme of incest seems to be the very leitmotif unifying the sequence of the story, at least in its first half, which is one of more innovative parts, i.e., as I would define it, one of the more *Senecan* parts of the play; and it¹¹² significantly reappears at the end to seal, as seen, the *grand finale*. Besides the already highlighted crucial moments in which the incest theme surfaces, i.e., (1) in Oedipus’ opening monologue (*Oedipus* 19–25); (2) in the scene of the sacrifice through its symbolism (esp. ll. 366–75); and (3) at the end, precisely at the moment both of Oedipus’ self-blinding (ll. 947–57; 975–7) and of Jocasta’ final entry and suicide (ll. 1036–9), the theme is evoked in the first encounter between Oedipus and Creon, after the *parodos* (“the chorus’ entry song”), where Creon reports Apollo’s response pertaining to the cause of the pestilence (esp. ll. 236–8). Differently

106 On the Stoics’ choice of suicide, see, e.g., Seneca, *Epistulae ad Lucilium* (“Letters to Lucilius”) 70. 12–5. For an accurate discussion about the way in which Jocasta chose to kill herself, see Degli’Innocenti Pierini (2012) espec. 106–10.

107 See, e.g. Macintosh (2009) 42; differently Degli’Innocenti Pierini (2012: 112–3) proposes Octavia, the unfortunate first wife of Nero, rather than Agrippina, as she argues that Tacitus’ text may allude to Seneca’s *Octavia* 368–70.

108 See above, 169.

109 Regarding this, see above, 171 with n. 87.

110 See, e.g., Macintosh (2009) 41.

111 See, e.g., Boyle (1997) 103.

112 An interesting structural analysis is in Curley (1986) esp. 84–90. For other bibliography discussing Seneca’s play in comparison with the Greek model, see, also, above, esp. nn. 88, 89.

from Sophocles, the response is quite detailed: Apollo's prophetess does not name Laius' killer, who—as in Sophocles—must be punished to avert the pestilence from Thebes. But she does describe him through details that perfectly fit Oedipus' profile, as he is a *hospes regis caede nocens* ("a guest stained with the blood of a king," *Oedipus* 234–5), who will bring war to himself, will leave war to his sons, and who *turpis maternos iterum revolutus in ortus* ("has shamefully returned again to [his] mother's womb," l. 238). Significantly not only does the incest occur at the end of a climax of misdeeds, but it is granted more weight than the other 'typical' crime associated to Oedipus, i.e., parricide, for the killer is evoked just as a regicide *hospes*.

The incest motif, in particular, then occurs in the necromancy, i.e., in the summoning of Laius' spirit, which follows the sacrifice scene performed by Tiresias and his daughter Manto. The sacrifice, properly called *extispicium* (i.e., divination through the inspection of entrails), and the necromancy are other important innovations in Seneca's rewriting. The sacrifice, which, as seen, heavily alludes to the incest through the confusion, the altered order, and the chaos of its outcomes,¹¹³ can be explained as an adaptation of the typical Greek seer figure, characterized by innate omniscience, to the religious system of the Roman world by turning Tiresias into a Roman *haruspex*.¹¹⁴ This Roman Tiresias, Manto, and Oedipus, as well as most of Seneca's audience, would believe that entrails from a sacrificed animal could communicate the divinity's answer to a question. And the question that Oedipus needs to have answered is "Who killed Laius?" Furthermore, in line with the gruesome taste of the time, this 'Romanized' scene might also serve to deepen the dreadful atmosphere pervading the play by adding new thrills of horror. This applies also to the following necromancy scene: the *exta* ("entrails") are overturned and the signs are confusing, so Tiresias' art is of no use. Therefore *alia temptanda est via* ("another way must be essayed," l. 392): it will be Laius himself who will denounce the killer; he must be summoned from the Underworld.¹¹⁵ As reported by Creon, Laius does not mention the guilty by name; once again a description, here more detailed, of the person's misdeeds replaces the denunciation. And again, and with more insistence, the incest crime stands out:

113 See above, 171. See also Pratt (1939) 93–9; he describes the scene as an "easily recognizable allegory," for a mythologically well-informed audience would have been able to decipher (the quotation is on p. 94). On the allegorical significance of the *extispicium*, see also Davis (1991) 158–9.

114 See, e.g., Müller (1953) 448; Paratore (1970) 111.

115 In Tiresias's expression *alia temptanda est via* Palmieri (1989) identifies rather a discourse of poetics, i.e., an expression of the author's wish to distance himself from the Greek model. Tiresias would thus played as Seneca's mouthpiece.

O savage house of Cadmus [...] / the love of mother is the crowning crime in Thebes / O fatherland [...] / not the plague-fraught wind with its ruinous blast [...] is harming you, / but a murderous king, who as a reward for the cruel killing / has seized the scepter and the incestuous chamber of the father/ [...] brought his own mother impious progeny / [...] and begot brothers to himself.

(Seneca, *Oedipus* 626–40)

Amor maternus (“the love of mother”) is significantly singled out, in the opening of Laius’ speech, as the *maximum scelus* (“crowning/biggest crime”), i.e., one is tempted to say, the quintessential epitome of evil, which is now destroying Thebes irremediably. The one to which Laius is now referring is a perverted mother’s love, as it is the love behind the incest.¹¹⁶ Indeed, as Laius continues to give details, the perversion, and thus the allusion to the incest, becomes apparent. Laius’ words, no doubt, add two important details that are missing in Apollo’s response earlier reported by Creon: the murderer is a king, and this king is a parricide, as Laius closes his speech claiming that he is his father (l. 659). Yet Laius’ furious utterance insistently evokes the perverted *maternus amor* (ll. 638–40): the cause of Thebes’ ruin is the patricidal king’s incest with his mother.¹¹⁷

Oedipus’ reaction marks the transition to a sequence of the story that, from now on, more closely follows Sophocles’ plotline, with the exception of the *grand finale*, as already seen. Because of Laius’ mention of a king, inevitably Oedipus feels that he is called into question. He reiterates his fear (e.g., ll. 659–60), distancing himself from his Sophoclean ancestor who failed to note the overlap between Laius’ oracle (as reported by Jocasta) and the oracle he received when was young, the one he is persuaded to have escaped.¹¹⁸ Indeed, Seneca’s Oedipus perseveres with this persuasion: Merope is still married to

116 The list of the dead which appear to Creon, before ‘meeting’ with Laius, *ad hoc* includes mythical characters whose story involves tragic outcomes on the ground of that same *amor maternus* about which Laius complains: at lines 609–17 the twin Amphion and Zethus, Niobe, and Agave are mentioned; and Agave is further evoked by Laius’s first words (*Oedipus*, 626–9). As far as Laius’ revelation is concerned, it would be safe to say that it much resembles Tiresias’ one in Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 446–62, although Laius’ indictment is certainly more direct and clear.

117 Cf. also, ll. 644–5.

118 In Sophocles, in fact, what provokes Oedipus’ fear and anxiety, thus setting in motion his ‘new’ quest, is Jocasta’s mention of the place where the murder of Laius occurred (*Oedipus the King*, 726–45). Yet Jocasta has previously mentioned the oracle that Laius and she had received in the past (cf. ll. 710–4), but it did not ring a bell for Oedipus, although it should

Polybus, and Polybus is still alive. This is enough to absolve him (*Oedipus* 661–4). But what of the accusation? (l. 665). Resuming some traits of Sophocles' Oedipus, he can only think of a conspiracy of Tiresias and Creon to usurp the throne: gods, sacrifice, necromancy, i.e., religion, are just their shield. Despite this 'logical' assumption, as in Sophocles, so in Seneca Oedipus is overwhelmed by anxiety. But, differently from Sophocles, in Seneca Oedipus by himself remembers that he has killed someone in the past on his way to Thebes; he knows where; but, to make a possible connection between his own deed and Laius' murder, he needs to know when the latter happened. Asking for details from Jocasta, Oedipus realizes he can be the regicide. The timely arrival of a Corinthian messenger with the news of Polybus' death both relieves him from his 'innate fear', and yet makes him even more anxious: again the incest is given some prominence as Oedipus states *sed pars magis metuenda fatorum manet* ("but the more fearsome part of my destiny remains," *Oedipus* 792). The incest is what he feared more (*magis*) than the parricide. From this moment on Oedipus' questioning, which leads to the discovery of his real identity, speeds up as Seneca masterfully condenses Sophocles' corresponding part,¹¹⁹ so that he may reserve space and emphasis to the *grand finale*, where the incest motif stands out one more time. In this *finale*, while deliberating on the form of an adequate punishment, Oedipus finds death to be too brief a penalty for such big crimes, as just one blow paying for all debts (ll. 936–8). It might be enough to expiate the parricide, but not enough for the mother and the ill-born children, i.e., not enough a penalty for the incest (ll. 938–9). He must find a punishment that would let nature, whose laws have been confused and inverted because of his unnatural union and offspring, restore its order. It must be a *mors longa*, i.e., a perennial punishment coequal to death, which would throw him in a kind of exile as he would be removed both from the living and the dead. Blindness is this *mors longa*: "let dig out these *incestuous* eyes", Oedipus cries, as he finds the appropriate punishment for the incest crime, in particular.

be noted that the content of the two oracles, as reported respectively by Jocasta (ll. 710–4) and Oedipus (ll. 787–93), does not perfectly match.

119 In Sophocles the questioning involving Oedipus' interrogation both of the messenger from Corinth and of Laius' servant covers the full third and fourth episode for a total of *circa* 223 lines (e.g., *Oedipus the King*, 957–1180); in Seneca the 'more or less' corresponding part consists of about 102 lines (e.g., *Oedipus*, 795–897). In Seneca, too,—one should note—at a certain point of this inquisition, Oedipus claims his desire to know the truth, against the reticence of Jocasta (ll. 825–37).

After Seneca, another relevant work of Roman Literature that is related to the story of Oedipus' house is the epic *Thebaid* by Statius (ca. 45–96 AD). Completed after about twelve years in 90 AD, the subject of this poem is an adaptation of a specific segment of Oedipus' myth as it details the attempt of Polynices, son of Oedipus, to get control of the throne of Thebes from his brother Eteocles. This epic thus mainly refers to the subject of Aeschylus' *Seven at Thebes* and is built on different sources: Statius in fact derived treatment of his themes and aspects of the plot from a variety of Greek and Roman tragedies dealing with the Theban myth.¹²⁰ In Statius' epic, Oedipus himself plays a very marginal role. As for his characterization, an influence from Euripides' *Phoenician Women* and, above all, from Seneca's *Oedipus* is more likely than from Sophocles' play. From Seneca, in particular, Statius might have derived the necromancy scene (*Thebaid*, book 4),¹²¹ and, more broadly, the emphasis on the theme of power in a way that, like in Seneca, reflects his contemporaneous Rome.¹²²

In the reception history of Oedipus' myth, despite the marginal role of the hero himself, Statius' *Thebaid* has, however, exerted a certain influence by serving as one of the main sources of inspiration for various, following adaptations, above all in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance.¹²³ In the Middle Ages, it was the decline in the knowledge of the Greek language and the low circulation of Seneca's tragedies that advanced, in a way, the success of Statius' poem.¹²⁴ In

120 For an accurate overview of Statius' *Thebaid*, see Dominick (2009) 514–8.

121 Regarding this, see Augustakis (2015), who also details Statius' innovations compared to Seneca.

122 With reference to this, see e.g., Dominick (2009) 522–4.

123 See below, n. 124. As for Late Antiquity, it might be possible to identify the occurrence of some Oedipal themes rather than factual adaptations of Sophocles' story of Oedipus. Such might be the case of the epyllion *Aegritudo Perdicae*, composed probably around the 5th century AD in North Africa. It details Perdica's incestuous love for his mother, a feeling he discovered and experienced first in a dream, which almost inevitably recalls to our mind Jocasta's words in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* 980–2. The youth gets physically sick for love and eventually commits suicide. To my eyes, the incestuous love may be related very slightly to Sophocles' Oedipus if one considers, among other things, that in Perdica's case it is a conscious desire. Furthermore, Perdica's incestuous desire, alongside his becoming ill and resorting to dying for that desire, might rather recall a variation on Phaedra's theme: see, e.g., Mattiacci (2007). On the 'flood' of Oedipal motifs in literature, see below, 240–6.

124 Statius's prominent influence in the reshaping of Oedipus' overall myth is peculiarly evident in the 12th-century *Roman de Thèbes* ("Romance of Thebes") written in Old French: for a detail discussion see Edwards (2015) 503–6. Although throughout the Middle Ages there were no literary works that could be traced back to Sophocles' Oedipus, at least

the High/Late Middle Ages (ca. 11th–12th century AD), the story specifically of the Sophoclean Oedipus resurfaces in a particular kind of poem written in Latin: the *Planctus* (“Lament”), namely *Planctus Oedipi* (“The lament of Oedipus”).¹²⁵ The ‘Laments’ were short poems, either in Latin or in the vernacular, mostly aimed at mourning the death of a famous person. They usually took the form of intimately personal, emotional monologues either of biblical or classical figures, with the latter being reshaped through the lens of Christianity. These monologues mostly portrayed the inner turmoil of the speaker’s mind, and they seem to be characterized by introspection and psychological insight. *Planctus Oedipi* is anonymous; it is the plaint of an old Oedipus who, while waiting for his death, reviews his past, recalling all the crucial phases of his wretched life, and all his ‘sins’, for which only he became famous over all the world:

Scelus meum dat fama pabula / De me sonat per orbem fabula.
In patenti locatum specula. Referetur crimen per saecula.

(*Planctus Oedipi* 45–8)

My sin nourishes my infamy, / And my tale echoes through all the world.
My eminence makes clear all that’s happened / And everlastingly my sin resounds.

He does not appear regenerated by the discovery of the truth and the awareness of his innocence, differently from the way the hero appears in his ‘final stage’, i.e., in *Oedipus at Colonus*. He is rather embittered by his sins and infamy. He is a Christian Oedipus who feels, and talks about, guilt rather than shame, which is something that one might expect from an ancient Greek hero. At the same time, as if conscious of his literary (pagan) life, at various points this Oedipus suggests that an inexorable fate accounts for his misery, so that he still sees himself as a victim of the gods and of the oracle that constrained his entire life. Significantly this reference occurs at the beginning and at the end of

in the early Middle Ages (ca. 5th–10th century AD), there were popular/folkloric narratives centering on the vicissitudes of a man, variously named, who embodied some basic features of the hero we know as Oedipus: exposition at the birth and subsequent adoption, unconscious parricide (in some stories) and incestuous marriage (in all the stories), self-punishment, dual nature (such as sinner/saint-savior), and so forth. For a brief overview, see Bettini/Guidorizzi (2004) 36–9; a detailed study is provided by Propp (1944 in Edmunds/Dundes [1983]), on which see, also, Beltrametti/Pagani (2013) 189–90.

125 About this adaptation, see Hahn (1980). The quotations of the Latin text and their translation into English are from Hahn.

the poem as if to frame, through a ring composition, his review of his ill-fated life (*Planctus Oedipi* 1–5, cf. with ll. 81–4). The combination of this classical idea of fate with the Christian idea of personal responsibility and guilt informs the whole poem, and a clear hint of his feeling nonetheless responsible, and thus deserving to pay for his guilt, can be detected where he refers to the self-blinding and to the resignation from his former power:

Cordia mei vulnus aperui / Quando mihi oculos erui.
Supplicium passus quod merui; / Meum regnum iure deserui.

I opened the wound in my heart / When I tore my eyes from their sockets.
I have made atonement as I should; / I've justly give over all my power.
(*Planctus Oedipi* 69–72).

Introspective anguish and comfortlessness are the prominent features of this lament: he wishes for death, again and again (e.g., ll. 18, 52, 68); the only comfort he would take is, in fact, to be worn away (l. 50). The reader is thus left with a sense of desolation and deep bitterness.

A real return to Sophocles' Oedipus occurs starting from the Renaissance with vernacular and Latin translations making the masterpiece of the Greek theater accessible both to common and to erudite readers. Italy and England share this 'renaissance' of the ancient play thanks to, and through, its circulation in translation.¹²⁶ Seneca's *Oedipus* is rediscovered as well. In Italy, in particular, Sophocles' play is nevertheless granted a privileged space in literary criticism, rather than in the dramatic literature, as a result of a renewed interest in Aristotle's *Poetics*.¹²⁷ Early Renaissance writers found Oedipus to be too problematic, with too many contradictions.¹²⁸ What most puzzled them was, in particular, the paradoxical dichotomy between intelligence and, in a way, intellectual slowness, which the hero would embody: he could solve the riddle of the Sphinx but could not put together the facts of his past, such as facts of time, place, number, etc., with those of his present. Hence the paradox

126 For an overview of the first and main translations and related bibliography, for Italy, see Guastella (2013) 259 with nn.5–11; for England, where Seneca's *Oedipus* was rather given preference, see Macintosh (2009) 46–9. On this subject see, also, below, 184 with n. 134.

127 About the major role played by Aristotle's *Poetics* in the literary criticism of Oedipus tragedy, see Javitch 2001.

128 See, e.g., Guastella (2013) 262–3. Also below, n. 133.

of the two Oedipuses originated.¹²⁹ Against the background of Aristotle's 'dogmatic' verdict on Sophocles' play, Renaissance writers thus struggled to resolve the split in the two Oedipuses. They might have recognized that, through the notion of *peripeteia* ("reversal", a change of fortune which compels one to face his past) and *anagnorisis* ("recognition", as a realization of one's own past in terms of the present), Aristotle's theory of character transformation could resolve the dichotomy. Yet, on a practical level, the writers still felt unable to deal with the story, at least in the same way as it was treated by Sophocles; they thus preferred to avoid his text and plotline, rather using its motifs.¹³⁰ Giovanni Andrea dell'Anguillara's *Edippo tragedia* ("The tragedy of Oedipus", ca. 1556 /1560) stands out against this backdrop. His play was both the first performed (probably in 1556 in Padua) and the first printed vernacular version of the Oedipus story in the Renaissance (probably in 1565).¹³¹ Anguillara re-creates the original Greek tragedy by combining Sophocles' and Seneca's play and going beyond both of them, as he includes the fratricidal fight of Polynices and Eteocles—which means, in other words, he also uses a variety of ancient sources, from Aeschylus to Euripides and Statius.¹³² The play consists of the canonical five acts, with the first three combining Sophocles' and Seneca's models, and the last two acts comprising the 'sequel' at Thebes. This innovation in the plot parallels an original re-arrangement of the chorus, which in fact is divided into two groups, one for each of the segments of the story: a male chorus, comprised of the Elders of Thebes, and a female one, comprised of the Maiden of Thebes. The male chorus closes the first segment with its comments on Oedipus' life story at the end of the Act 3, where it passes the baton to the female chorus, which seals the end of the second segment, and the overall tragedy, with its comment on Jocasta's suicide.

129 See, e.g., Fabrizio (1995) 179.

130 Perhaps one of the most important works representative of this trend is *Il Re Torrismondo* ("Torrismondo the King", 1587) by the Italian poet Torquato Tasso (1544–1595), a tragedy that can be fairly labeled a 'tangle' of Oedipal motifs (on which, see below, 240–6). Tasso's can hardly be defined as a re-elaboration of Sophocles' play, in that the latter, or, better say, Aristotle's reading of Sophocles' play highlighting the features of the ideal tragedy (reversal and recognition), seems to have been rather the 'excuse' for building a play respecting those Aristotelian standards and re-using just the basics of the Sophoclean Oedipus' story with the incest being given a special space. Tasso's Oedipus figure is 'fragmented' into four Oedipal figures, and the incest motif is 'extended' to sister-brother ties: for a detailed analysis, see Giampieri (2003).

131 See Fabrizio (1995) 178; Mazzoni (1998) 176 with n. 145; Di Maria (2005).

132 Regarding this, see Paduano (1994) 266–70.

Like in Seneca, Jocasta's suicide occurs after Oedipus' self-blinding, i.e., at the very the end of the play. Both Oedipus and Jocasta are portrayed as *exempla* of the inexorable unavoidability of the *malvagia sorte* ("cruel destiny"), whose plan eludes human understanding. As for Seneca's influence, a particularly clear mark can be detected in the reference to a sacrifice predicting the imminent misfortunes: in a dialogue between Jocasta and her daughters—who thus replace Seneca's Manto—the details of that sacrifice are fully evoked and, in addition, clearly explained.¹³³

The extension of the plotline of Sophocles' Oedipus along with a predominant Senecan vein also characterizes one of the very few Oedipus plays which appear in England in the early Renaissance:¹³⁴ the 195-lines playlet *Oedipus* (1578) by the leading neo-Latin dramatist of the day, William Gager. Written in Latin, it is not clear whether it was intended for performance or, due to its brevity, was just a part of a larger project. However short, the basic events of Oedipus' tragedy are placed in a wider context that includes the fight between Eteocles and Polynices over Thebes' throne.¹³⁵

A preference for a diachronic account of Oedipus' tragic life seems to be identifiable in the few renditions of the period as if the exemplarity of the tragic characters could be fully grasped only through a comprehensive exploration of their lives. This tendency lasted until the early 17th century, as proved by the poet Thomas Evans' *Oedipus* published in 1615. His play is in fact subtitled *Three Cantoes wherein is contained: 1. His unfortunate Infancy, 2. His execrable Actions, 3. His lamentable End*.¹³⁶ Evans' version might be significantly seen as a response to his own time: London's outbreak of the plague in 1606 and

133 A profound analysis of this tragedy with a focus on his originality and on his contrast with the current trend is in Fabrizio (1995). Anguillara tried to repair the dichotomy and to overcome what were felt as inconsistencies by also using various ancient sources, such as Euripides and Statius, and by articulating different segments and features into a specific logical world, one which would rather reflect (with a large advance) Freud's version of the family drama where the 'bothering' dichotomy between the two Oedipuses is made more rationally understandable in terms of division between unconscious desire and conscious action, suppression and anxiety. About Freud and Oedipus, see below, 207–10.

134 Seneca, rather than Sophocles, appears to be 'the mold' of Oedipus plays in Early-Renaissance England, with access to his tragedies made easy by the appearance of a number of English translation of individual plays from 1559 onward: see above, n. 131. About the absence of Oedipus' play on the English stage in this period, see also Ziosi (2012) esp. 165–8.

135 See Macintosh (2009) 48.

136 See Macintosh (2009) 49 with n.29.

1608 was still vivid in the collective memory, and the institution of monarchy was under scrutiny and was becoming insecure.

The political motif is one that eminently surfaces in the dramatic treatment of the Oedipus' myth in Renaissance France, in particular from the 17th century on.¹³⁷ In comparison with Italy and, above all, with England, there was a flood of tragedies of Oedipus in France,¹³⁸ which made this nation become 'the' hot-bed of Oedipus' reception.

Undoubtedly, the most important rewriting of Oedipus' tragedy in 17th-century France is *Oedipe* by the well-known French dramatist Pierre Corneille. Published and first performed in 1659, it met with such a great appreciation that it continued to be part of the theater's repertoire until about the first decades of the 18th century.¹³⁹ Not only does Corneille emphasize the political overtone of the story, and mostly in Seneca's vein,¹⁴⁰ he also structurally innovates with the plot by breaking with the single-strand plot tradition. From the very beginning of the play Corneille introduces a 'romantic' subplot involving two new figures: Dirce, a legitimate daughter of Laius and Jocasta, and thus an unknowing sister to Oedipus, and her suitor-lover Theseus, the famous king of Athens. Through the political and love motifs, Corneille modernizes the ancient tragedy, making it accessible and relevant to the contemporary taste: where the political theme would resonate with the political atmosphere of the time, the love story would be the major 'appeal' for the masses.¹⁴¹ The positioning of the subplot's characters and theme in such an emphatic place as the opening of the play—where in the ancient sources we find Oedipus himself facing the plague—proves to be a subtle device to underline precisely the politic motif and Oedipus' related role, rather than to obscure it with the love motif.¹⁴² Dirce and Theseus debate with love over

137 Regarding this, see, e.g., Macintosh (2009) 49–50; 73–4. As far as the political reference is concerned, see Biet (1994).

138 According to Edmunds (2006) 96, 17 French tragedies of Oedipus were produced in that century; see also Boyle (2011) xcvi.

139 See, e.g., Sheehan (2012) 129. On Corneille's *Oedipe* see Paduano (2008) 89–99; Macintosh (2009) 50–3; 74–6; Citti/Iannucci (2012) xxxii–xxxviii. My discussion is drawn upon these works. I shall add to them, as occasion demands.

140 Seneca, rather than Sophocles, seems in fact to be the main ancient source of inspiration as the theme of the *regnum*—which translates into the motif of the contemporary French monarchy—emphatically marks the plotline.

141 Regarding this, see Genette (1982) 229.

142 As it is discussed above, the political legitimacy, rather than parricide and incest, is, indeed, the main concern. Regarding this, see Biet (1994) 208–10; Paduano (2008) 90–3; Citti/Iannucci (2012) xxxiii–xxxiv.

who should leave the town for one's own safety, given that the plague is sparing no one: Dirce prompts Theseus to leave, but Theseus would never leave her in such danger. He would ask Dirce's hand from Oedipus, her 'stepfather', so that he might bring her away from polluted Thebes to safe Athens. Theseus thus seems to be the protagonist with Oedipus being the antagonist and playing a supporting role. But Dirce, from the beginning, questions the legitimacy of Oedipus' kingship, which places the political motif in the foreground. As a sort of double of Electra, she hates her mother who has married a 'foreign' man; she in fact considers Oedipus a usurper of the legitimate throne, which for *le droit du sang* ("by right of blood") would belong to her. Although, as Oedipus confesses to his servant, *le sang a peu de droits dans le sexe imbécile* ("Blood has few rights in the fool gender", *Oedipe*, Act 1, sc. 3. 225),¹⁴³ he however feels some fear as he adds:

Mais c'est un grand prétexte à troubler une ville;
Et lorsqu' un tel orgueil se fait un fort appui,
Le roi le plus puissant doit tout craindre de lui

But it is a great excuse to disturb a city;
And when such a pride gets a strong support,
The king most powerful should fear everything from it.

(*Oedipe*, Act 1, sc. 3. 226–8)

This fear is the real reason why Oedipus would refuse Theseus' request for Dirce's hand, a fear that Oedipus disguises as an honest commitment to respect the promise which he had made to Haemon, i.e., to give him Dirce in marriage:

Aemon serait pour moi digne de la princesse: / S'il a de la naissance, il a
quelque faiblesse; / Et le peuple du moins pourrait se partager, / Si dans
quelque attentat il osait l'engager; / Mais un prince voisin, tel que tu vois
Thésée, / Ferait de ma couronne une conquête aisée, / Si d'un pareil hymen
le dangereux lien / Armait pour lui son peuple et soulevait le mien.

Haemon for me would be worthy of the princess: / If he is noble by birth,
he has some weakness, too; / And the people at least could split, If any /
attack he dared to commit; / But a neighbor prince, as you see, Theseus, /
Would make my crown an easy conquest, / If dangerous link of such a
marriage / Armed his people for him and raised my own.

(*Oedipe*, (Act 1, sc. 3. 265–72)

143 Quotations are from Radt's edition (1942).

Like Seneca's Oedipus, this Oedipus, too, is overwhelmed by fear; the nature of their fear is different: the first is concerned about being punished for having dared to circumvent his destiny; the second is concerned about being overthrown. If Dirce marries Theseus, with such support she might get enough power to take over the throne.¹⁴⁴ Against this backdrop, Theseus-Dirce replace Sophocles' and Seneca's Creon as the focus of Oedipus' fear of a conspiracy, which typically characterizes the tyrant-figure.¹⁴⁵ It is thus evident that the political motif, precisely the legitimate rule, is the main theme of this adaptation, far more than the two typical ones, i.e., parricide and incest—not to mention the investigation and self-discovery themes.¹⁴⁶ Not accidentally the Sophoclean feature of recognition, precisely the discovery of the parricide and incest, is confined to the very end. While advancing the political theme, the romantic subplot also enhances the more 'Sophoclean' part of the plot: it is Theseus who sets in motion the search for the regicide, which, ultimately, will lead to Oedipus' identification. Following Seneca, Laius' ghost must be summoned to know how to heal Thebes from the plague. Laius' words are highly ambiguous, and it is exactly his ambiguity that enhances the action. Significantly, all rotates around *le sang de race* ("the blood of the family/lineage"): a crime has been left unpunished; this is the cause of the present misery, which can be overcome only until the blood of his (sc. Laius') family is spilled (Act 2, sc. 3). This is the verdict of Laius, which is *ad hoc* misunderstood in that it is believed that Dirce, daughter of Laius, must be immolated to appease the dead king and save the kingdom. Dirce is ready to embrace the sacrifice for the sake of the community's wellbeing, thus proving that she is the legitimate heir, the 'positive' double of Oedipus,¹⁴⁷ but Theseus cannot allow this. To save Dirce he pretends to be the son born to Laius and Jocasta against the prophecy that the couple received in the past (the well-known prophecy predicting parricide and incest), i.e., he pretends to be who Oedipus actually is. Theseus' blood—he claims—is what Laius' ghost demands. Theseus however denies having killed Laius, i.e., being a parricide, and admits to potentially

144 See, also, Dirce in Act 2 sc. 2. 532–6: she clearly denounces the political essence of Oedipus' motivation to prefer Aemon as her spouse: it is not because he despises Theseus; he just fears that the sovereign right (which actually is due to Dirce) falls in bad hands.

145 See above, 158 with n. 33.

146 And, accordingly, it seems there is no trace of Oedipus' intellectual sharpness.

147 About this characterization of Dirce, see, e.g., Doubrovsky (1963) 339. Fracillon (1983) 36, commenting on the centrality of Dirce character, observes: *Le mythe d'Oedipe est ainsi curieusement mis au service de la cause de l'émancipation féminine au XVIIIème siècle!* ("Oedipus' myth is also curiously put in service of women's emancipation in the 17th century!").

being 'incestuous', given his love for Dirce, who would now be his sister. His arguments are very weak, indeed, and ironically Jocasta, who did not recognize Oedipus, shows herself sure that Theseus is not the son whom she believes dead, for she cannot recognize *la voix du sang* ("the voice/call of the blood") in the Athenian king. The servant Forbas, the one who was supposed to abandon the child to death, is summoned for identification, upon Tiresias' advice. A *coup de théâtre* occurs with Forbas' arrival: Oedipus recognizes him as one of Laius' attackers (this is, at least, what he believes), which constitutes an original inversion—I would say—of one of the threads of Sophocles' plot, where the servant at first was summoned to give crucial information about Laius' attack, and, thus, to possibly recognize Oedipus as the attacker and murderer.¹⁴⁸ In Corneille, since the beginning (Act 1, sc. 5), Oedipus remembers Laius' accident and where it occurred, persuaded that he happened to be there only right after the robbers had killed Laius. Corneille's Oedipus in fact believes that he has killed the robbers, except one (presumably Forbas), and has thus, unawares, vindicated Laius' murder. But Forbas' description of the killed men reveals Oedipus as being the killer of Laius as well.

As a confirmation of the priority given to the political theme, it should be noted that Corneille is the first to separate—even with the pause between the two acts (namely, Act 4 and Act 5)—the discovery of the regicide from the discovery of the parricide, and, thus, the incest: with Forbas' intervention, Oedipus is found to be the certain murderer of Laius; only later, he is found to also be the son of Laius, and thus a parricide and an incestuous husband. This discovery occurs with the arrival of the messenger from Corinth (Act 5) who brings news of Polybus' death. Once again, not only is the political motif—precisely, the legitimacy of the ruler—in the spotlight, it also advances the 'traditional' threads of the story (the discovery of parricide and incest), which evidently are in a subordinate position, upon the final recognition of Oedipus' real identity. Regarding this, differently from Sophocles' and Seneca's models, Oedipus is not expected, nor invited, to go to Corinth to take the throne: about to die, Polybus has revealed that Oedipus is not his real son, nor is he thus the legitimate heir of Corinth's kingdom. From this revelation the rest comes in Sophocles' closer style, with some exceptions, which, once again, are aimed at emphasizing the political theme. Jocasta's suicide—and with it the incest theme—is in a way overshadowed by being preceded, and almost caused, by Forbas' suicide, with the latter being unable to endure the 'horror' he caused

148 As is well known, in Sophocles this servant is then questioned about the child he had exposed, according to the Corinthian messenger, rather than being questioned about Laius' incident. This is a feature that Corneille, in a way, maintains, as the servant is summoned to recognize Theseus.

by saving baby Oedipus. More significantly, Oedipus' self-blinding, which occurs at the end, rather than being presented as a punishment, is 'celebrated' as what has restored the order by ending the plague and signaling Oedipus as the legitimate king of Thebes: as he belongs to Laius' race, he has saved the reign with his blood. *La sang de [ma] race* ("the blood of [my] family"), which Laius' ghost demanded, is Oedipus' blood spilling from his eyes: *Ce sang si précieux touché à peine la terre, / Que le couroux du ciel ne leur fait plus la guerre* ("This precious blood barely touches the ground, / That the wrath of heaven no longer wages its war," *Oedipe* Act 5, sc. 9. 2007–8), Oedipus' confidant Dymas says when reporting his master's self-blinding to Dirce and Theseus, at the conclusion of the play.

Corneille's *Oedipe* is a play with a 'happy ending',¹⁴⁹ as the hero continues to rule legitimately and, what is more, is reconciled with Dirce, for whom the usurper becomes the greatest king ever as *le sang de race* has prevailed. *Le sang de race* is a leitmotif of this play, for it connotes the rightful ruler (as Dirce had claimed at first for herself), the real identity of the exposed baby, and eventually the rightful scapegoat and savior, legitimate king of the town. This emphasis on the 'family's blood'—precisely, the blood of a royal family—rests upon the 'right of blood' in the matter of royal inheritance. The privileging of the political theme, specifically in these terms, is but the result of Corneille's adaptation of the story to *le grand siècle* of Louis XIV, the Sun King.¹⁵⁰ By the time of Corneille's première, the legitimate king, Louis XIV, was too young, and although the regency was taken over by his mother, the co-ruler Cardinal Mazarin was far more influential. It has been argued that Dirce's would be the voice of orthodox absolutism as her claims would echo Louis XIV's own worries and the desire to protect his rightful place at the throne.¹⁵¹ Others would identify the future Louis XIV rather with Theseus, with the latter being a symbol of hope for the institution of the monarchy, where the figure of Mazarin lurks behind Oedipus the *tyrant*—an outsider who ruled by popular consent without hereditary entitlement.¹⁵²

Although not as central as in Corneille, yet still deeply significant and modernizing, the political motif surfaces in, and intersects with, the plotline of another 17th-century adaptation of Sophocles' play that appears on the English stage about twenty years after Corneille's work, and became as popular in England as its French counterpart had been in France: *Oedipus* by the great

149 About this 'happy ending', see Paduano (2008) 98–9 with further bibliography in n. 59.

150 For an analysis focusing on the political theme with reference specifically to King Louis XIV, see Francillon (1983); Bilis (2010).

151 Bilis (2010).

152 Macintosh (2009) 53 considers Theseus as the 'good king'/alter ego of Oedipus.

17th century Poet Laureate, dramatist, and translator John Dryden and his friend, the playwright Nathaniel Lee.¹⁵³ First performed in 1678 in London,¹⁵⁴ Dryden-Lee's *Oedipus* remained successful on the stage for over a hundred years¹⁵⁵ before falling into oblivion with the new 19th-century sensibility, which 'killed' a play that emphatically treated such a thorny theme as incest. Dryden-Lee's play in fact proves to be especially innovative for the provocative way in which it handles one of Oedipus' two 'crimes', i.e., incest, crimes that, from Late Antiquity onward, have 'stolen the show' from the tragic and highly emotionally complex self-discovery journey characterizing the Greek ancestor. With the contemporary French tradition, in particular Corneille, Dryden-Lee's *Oedipus* shares the modernizing addition of a romantic subplot¹⁵⁶ (or "under-plot", in their own words),¹⁵⁷ along with the resonance with contemporary political concerns. Corneille is the first who is explicitly acknowledged by the authors in the *Preface*, which they added to the published text in 1679; Sophocles comes as second, and Seneca as third, although with some reservations. As for the under-plot, it concerns the love story between Euridice, legitimate daughter of Laius, and thus sister to Oedipus (i.e., the counterpart of Corneille's Dirce), and a foreign prince, Adrastus (i.e., the counterpart of Corneille's Theseus). Differently from Corneille, the secondary plot and its characters do not obscure Oedipus, nor do they confine him to the antagonistic role. This is a 'mistake' that the two authors ascribed indeed to Corneille. By restoring Sophocles' great hero as he appears since the outset, i.e., as a just,

153 About this adaptation, see, in general, Giulietti (1989); Paduano (2008) 104–11; Macintosh (2009) 57–64; Citti/Iannucci (2012) xxxviii–xlix.

154 About the specifics of this performance see Macintosh (2009) 57–8; Ziosi (2012) 168 with n. 22.

155 See Novak/Roper (1985) 441–8 for the dates of the productions.

156 Corneille's influence in the adding of a love-based subplot, with a political overtone, can be also detected in a 17th-century Italian rewriting of Oedipus' play by the rhetorician and dramatist Emanuele Tesauro (1591–1675), a former Jesuit and priest. On account of his religious credo Tesauro seems to approach the tragedy to explore the issue of fate, free will, and personal responsibility. Much space is given to Tiresias. Turned into a priest, in contrast to his antecedents, in particular the Senecan one, he is able to recognize all the 'celestial' signs—such a skill that contrasts with the consistent failure of Oedipus' rational response to those same signs. This Tiresias is accordingly persuaded of Oedipus' responsibility, so that, whereas in Sophocles the scales tip in favor of innocence, in Tesauro, through Tiresias' lenses, the scales firmly tip in favor of guilt. For an analysis of this play from Tiresias' point of view, see, in particular, Citti/Iannucci (2012) xxix–xxx; more in general on Tesauro's *Edipo* ("Oedipus"), see Paduano (2008) 99–104.

157 See Novak (1984) 115–7.

merciful, successful king, a father of his country, concerned with the safety of his people rather than being anxious to keep the crown, Dryden-Lee transfer all the negative, 'political' features of Corneille's Oedipus to Creon, whose characterization undergoes some changes. Not only do the authors make him exactly the one whom Sophocles' Oedipus, at a certain point, suspected him to be, i.e., a hypocritical man, thirsty for power, a kind of Elizabethian *villain* comparable to Shakespeare's *Richard III*,¹⁵⁸ but they also have him partake of the love-based under-plot, for Creon turns out to be in love with Euridice. It is in fact Creon—not Oedipus, like in Corneille—who opposes the marriage between Euridice and Adrastus. An oracle, which sounds very similar to the words of Laius' ghost in Corneille, demands that the blood of Laius' killer be spilled to heal Thebes from the plague. This blood must be 'the first of Laius' blood', according to Tiresias' interpretation. Like in Corneille, the sure 'blood' of Laius is that of her legitimate daughter, here Euridice. It is Creon who, to take revenge for having been refused by Euridice, fingers her for the murder: the oracle demands her blood. Similarly to Corneille's Theseus, but without his fantastic made-up story about his origin, Adrastus steps forward to replace Euridice. Creon exploits the situation, pretending to believe that, with this move, Adrastus is actually confessing to be the killer of Laius. But Tiresias prevents Euridice and Adrastus from being killed by resorting to necromancy: he intends to summon Laius' ghost, which might clarify the oracle's words. The summoning of Laius, which here happens at the presence of Adrastus and Euridice, too, is admittedly inspired by Seneca, although a Shakespearean influence can be detected as well. Laius' words are even clearer than in Corneille, given that not only does he mention the king, but he names precisely him: *Oedipus* is the murderer, the one who stains his father's bed. After this, Dryden-Lee follow more closely Sophocles' plotline, with the altercation between Oedipus, who cannot believe Tiresias, and Tiresias himself: the suspect of conspiracy and the tirade against the prophets fill this portion along with an innovative intervention of Creon. He is not involved in Oedipus' accusation, for demagogically he pretends to side with the king against the seer. But doubts torment Oedipus as Tiresias leaves him with the exhortation to remember Laius. Just in time Jocasta enters, and, once again, the plotline continues as in Sophocles, with Jocasta ironically trying to reassure Oedipus about the doubtful nature of oracles by narrating what happened to Laius. Here, too, the place is what 'rings the bell' and prompts Oedipus to tell his own past story. Like in Sophocles, here, too, the number of the attackers becomes crucial, and the only survivor must be summoned.

¹⁵⁸ See, e.g., Macintosh (2009) 61. For an accurate intertextual analysis attentive to Shakespeare's varied influence, see Bigliuzzi (2014).

Novelties intertwine with the traditional plot in a way that they may both prioritize the incest theme and advance the political theme as well. Significantly, for instance, before the necromancy episode, in Shakespeare's apparent style, a sleepwalking scene occurs: Oedipus, with a dagger in one hand and a taper in the other (symbolically foreshadowing events that will be soon acted out), dreams of parricide and incest with the latter being the one he singles out when, awake, he confesses to Jocasta: "I dreamt, *Jocasta*, that thou wert my Mother" (*Oedipus* Act 2, sc. 1. 388).¹⁵⁹ And, as an anachronistic Freudian Oedipus, the hero remembers this same dream when he is left alone by Tiresias with the exhortation: "Remember Laius." Significantly as well, scenes where Creon, seemingly on the side of Oedipus, stirs up the people of Thebes against the king to usurp power intersect the traditional storyline which, about to seal the downfall of Oedipus, openly reveals him as being the murderer and incestuous husband. Like in Sophocles, the recognition in fact occurs with the arrival of the Corinthian messenger, and the ensuing confrontation between this messenger and the summoned Phorbas. The latter, like Sophocles' shepherd, specifies that it was Jocasta who gave him Oedipus child to be abandoned to death because of a dreadful oracle. Differently from Sophocles, and rather in the style of the author's time, the ending reflects a Jacobean taste as it leaves corpses littering the stage: Oedipus' demise in fact sets in motion a universal massacre. Upon the discovery of Oedipus' identity and his 'crimes', Creon, who has so far conspired against the king, can now freely take power over Thebes. Exploiting this new position, he once again targets Euridice and Adrastus and takes the situation to the extreme. Exacerbated by Euridice's insurmountable reluctance, Creon stabs her; by reaction Adrastus stabs Creon and is, in turn, wounded and killed by Creon's soldiers. Creon, wounded mortally, dies as well. The end of the love-based subplot engulfs the political theme, too, without exerting any interference on the end of the primary plot. Love indeed is what, in a way, and I would say in a provocative way, seems to triumph despite all the tragedy of mass death. The very end puts Oedipus' and Jocasta's relationship in the spotlight, a relationship that they have been experiencing with true love and which they do not regret, even though that love is found to be incestuous.

As hinted at above, the incest is indeed the main focus of Dryden-Lee's rewriting. Oedipus and Jocasta are often portrayed as two tender lovers, abandoned in each other's arms and ready to declare their love to each other over and over again.¹⁶⁰ They sublimate their love by weighing it through an analogy (ironically !) to a filial / maternal love. Oedipus, in fact, once tells Jocasta that

159 The quotation is from Novak (1984).

160 About this, see Scorrano/Ventricelli (2013) 94–108 (esp. 95).

there are no words to express his love for her, nor is there a devoted son who has ever loved his mother as Oedipus loves Jocasta. And, in answer, Jocasta states that she feels for him exactly in the same way (*Oedipus* Act 2, sc. 1. 527–32). This love is reconfirmed at the very end. It is not denied, nor is it rejected, as it is, for instance, in Seneca. Although aware of the transgression, which has led him to the self-mutilation, Oedipus cannot really detach himself from Jocasta's love. Their love is so strong until the very end that they are almost careless of the transgression, to the point that Laius' ghost has to intervene from beneath the stage to prevent an ultimate violation of the taboo.

The story ends with new deaths: not only does Jocasta die by committing suicide after Oedipus' self-blinding—like in Seneca; she also first kills the children she bore to Oedipus: she hangs the two daughters and stabs the two sons! Hence Oedipus, too, dies, as he throws himself from a window upon learning of Jocasta's death and her carnage.

For the first time in an Oedipus' play, Oedipus and Jocasta are portrayed as a couple in love, rather than as merely the royal married couple of Thebes. In this new perspective a particular space is also reserved for Jocasta, a character usually seen and treated as a foil to Oedipus. In Dryden-Lee's adaptation Jocasta is first all a woman in love, rather than a queen or wife; she is ready to do anything for the sake of love. Hers is the tragedy of a woman in love who discovers herself to be the mother of her companion, and yet is still in love with him to the point that, as if to annihilate her role and identity as a mother, she kills her children. She is a woman who stands for her love, which she does not see as 'stained' by the discovered horror of incest. Like in Seneca, this Jocasta too proclaims Oedipus' innocence, and her own innocence as well, putting all the blame on fate: she stands for her innocence and that of Oedipus, for it has been fate alone that has made them wretched.¹⁶¹

Some special emphasis on the Jocasta figure, which can still be traced back to Seneca, will remain a mark of many other adaptations to follow. As for the incest, certainly, the priority given to this theme is another component of the play for which Dryden-Lee are indebted to Seneca; but the socio-cultural contemporary atmosphere might have affected the authors' view, as their version ultimately becomes "a meditation on the prohibition of incest altogether."¹⁶² During the Commonwealth era (ca. 1649–1660), for the first time incest was made a crime and punishable by death under the Act of Parliament for

161 Regarding this specific Senecan trait in Dryden-Lee's play, see Macintosh (2009) 59–60.

162 Macintosh (2009) 60.

May 1650.¹⁶³ From that moment on until the Restoration (ca. 1660–1714) and beyond (until about 1908), incest was still seen as a criminal offence, but punishable only by the ecclesiastic courts, and not by the civil ones. This is a significant turning point, which would make Dryden-Lee's adaptation of Oedipus' play "a bold espousal of Restoration values."¹⁶⁴

Although independently from Dryden-Lee's play and, perhaps more importantly, without any emphasis on the incest theme,¹⁶⁵ Jocasta is granted a special space in what has been defined "the greatest dramatic success of eighteenth century France,"¹⁶⁶ i.e., *Oedipe* by Voltaire (1718). With the new translation and commentary of Sophocles' play by the classical scholar André Dacier (ca. 1651–1722),¹⁶⁷ a new proliferation of Oedipus plays occurs in *la France des Lumières* ("France, at the age of Enlightenment").¹⁶⁸ Voltaire's work is the most notable. Its elaboration, which started in 1712, was complemented by about seven letters of critical analysis, which the author himself compiled. In those letters he anatomizes the original play, with insights on Corneille's rewriting as well, to logically justify his own choices 'in the light of reason'. It was the Sophoclean Oedipus' curiosity that captivated Voltaire's interest. For Voltaire, in fact, and, more generally, for the Enlightenment mind, the hero's firm pursuit of the truth in the scene with the Theban shepherd is the only 'reasonable' action staged in Sophocles' play.¹⁶⁹ in his assessment of the facts, late though it occurred, Oedipus proves to be a true figure of the Enlightenment. But this action alone would not be a sufficient subject of a whole tragedy—a criticism that Voltaire extends to Greek drama in general.¹⁷⁰ The ensuing need to enlarge the plot, and the pressure of the audience's taste of the time, along with Corneille's acknowledged influence, demanded an insertion of a romantic subplot. And here in particular is where Jocasta is granted a special space, as she is the female lover—a platonic one—in the 'new' couple whose story

163 See Macintosh (2009) 60 with n. 47.

164 Macintosh (2009) 60.

165 Indeed, it seems that Voltaire almost overlooked this crucial motif: see Funaioli (2012) 182 with n. 26. It has been argued that the innovative romantic subplot pertaining to Philoctetes and Jocasta might have worked as a way to "exorcize" the incest theme: Paduano (2008) 113–4; Funaioli (2012) 183.

166 Vernant/Vidal-Naquet (1988) 373. My discussion of Voltaire's play is mainly based on Paduano (2008) 111–8; Macintosh (2009) 75–9; Funaioli (2012) 179–85; Mazzocut-Mis (2014).

167 1692 is the publication date of Dacier's translation and commentary of *Oedipus the King*, along with that of *Electra*: see Macintosh (2009) 73–4.

168 There were, indeed, about 14 Oedipus plays: see, e.g., Funaioli (2012) 180.

169 Macintosh (2009) 75 with n. 18.

170 Voltaire (1877) I: 29, on which see Paduano (2008) 111–2; Sheehan (2012) 130.

informs the subplot. The male component is Philoctetes, Heracles' best friend, who happened to go back to Thebes after Heracles' death. Being the 'common denominator' of the primary/leading couple (with Oedipus) and of the secondary one (with Philoctetes), not only does Jocasta carry considerable weight with the plotline, but she also gains in depth and autonomy. Since the outset she becomes a central character,¹⁷¹ the protagonist of a story of her own, a story that does not run parallel to, but rather interferes in the main one (i.e., in her story with Oedipus).¹⁷² The story between Jocasta and Philoctetes is a mutual, chaste, and genuine love that existed even before Jocasta's marriage with Laius, a forced marriage, since Jocasta was coerced by her father into marrying him. After and because of this marriage, Philoctetes left Thebes and 'sublimated' his love into the heroic career that he pursued by following Heracles. As for Jocasta, she had just to silently accept what her father had decided for her—and how could she not, considering the status of women in that time.¹⁷³ Yet she never forgot her very first love, nor did she stop to secretly be in love with Philoctetes:

Mon souverain m'aima, m'obtint malgré moi-même; [...] / Tu sais qu'à mon devoir tout entière attachée, / J'étouffai de mes sens la révolte cache

My King loved me, obtained me despite myself; [...] / You know that, completely attached to my duty, / I suffocated the rebellion of my hidden feelings

(*Oedipe*, Act 2, sc. 2)¹⁷⁴

This is what Jocasta confides to Égine, her confidant, who assumes that now her mistress is 'shared' between the two heroes, i.e., Philoctetes and Oedipus. Jocasta goes on saying that tenderness is what she has been feeling for Oedipus, not certainly the burning fire that only Philoctetes was able to give birth to in her heart:

171 See Mazzocut-Mis (2014) 117. It is possible that Voltaire grants the Jocasta figure a more autonomous and significant role in reaction to Corneille, who, bringing Dirce to the fore, relegated Jocasta to an almost insignificant role: see Voltaire (1877) II.1: 31.

172 This marks an important difference compared to Corneille's and Dryden-Lee's plays: see Paduano (2008) 112.

173 As is well known, silence and submission were the societal expectations from a woman (a concise overview of this topic is in Lauriola [2012]); and, as far as marriage is concerned, it is likewise well known that the woman did not have a voice in that (see, e.g., Harrison [1968] 1–60): it would be enough to mention Sophocles, *Tereus* fr. 583 Radt.

174 The quotations are from Voltaire (1877) II. 1.

Je sentais pour OEdipe une amitié sévère: / OEdipe est vertueux, sa vertu
m'était chère; / Mon coeur avec plaisir le voyait élevé / Au trône des
Thébains qu'il avait conserve

I felt for Oedipus an austere friendship: / Oedipus is virtuous, his virtue
was dear to me; / With pleasure my heart saw him raised / to the throne
of the Thebans that he had saved

(*Oedipe*, Act 2, sc.2)

These words are emblematic of the true character of Voltaire's Jocasta: a woman committed to the obligations of her family and society, firmly determined to preserve virtues, and yet a woman in love—a pure, chaste love—with the person she is not supposed to love. This Jocasta did not hate her first husband, Laius, despite all things; she just respected him. Nor does Jocasta hate her second, current husband, Oedipus, despite the fact that she was forced to marry him, too, in that—as is well known—she was promised to the conqueror of the Spinx. Yet, differently from Laius, Oedipus seems to have touched the queen's heart in some way, as the tenderness and the austere friendship that Jocasta admits to feeling prove well.

The 'revived' love between Philoctetes and Jocasta occupies the *incipit* of Voltaire's tragedy, precisely the first two acts: once back, coming to know that Laius died, Philoctetes hopes that he and Jocasta would be together. His is an ephemeral hope, for he is soon told by his confidant about Oedipus. In addition to coping with this 'renewed' frustration of his romantic dream, Philoctetes happens to face an unexpected danger. The High Priest, who replaces the seer Tiresias, has just revealed his divine response about how to heal Thebes from the plague: Laius' murder must be avenged. Suspicion falls on Philoctetes because of his hatred toward the 'imposed' husband of his true love, Jocasta. Indignant at such a suspicion, Jocasta tries to persuade Philoctetes to leave Thebes and save himself from both the pestilence and the calumnies. Indeed, Philoctetes disappears after the third act when the High Priest clarifies the divine response by naming Oedipus as murderer, and thus clears Philoctetes' name. Introduced for the sake of the romantic subplot and for an exploitation of the oracle's equivocal words,¹⁷⁵ once the romantic dream collapses and the oracle is clarified, Philoctetes can no longer play a 'reasonable' role. His presence until the moment in which the course of action becomes closer to Sophocles' original plotline is consistent with the rationalizing effort of Voltaire: introducing Philoctetes as a rival, in a way, of Laius 'reasonably' enlarges the spectrum

175 As it is the case of Theseus in Corneille and Adrastus in Dryden-Lee: see above, 187; 191; also Paduano (2008) 112–3.

of the potential killers of Laius, a spectrum that Sophocles' Oedipus confined to Creon. While Philoctetes disappears, Jocasta remains, and stands out until the very end, for her suicide occurs on-stage, after the off-stage Oedipus' self-blinding, while the final curtain goes down:

Et moi, je me punis.
 Par un pouvoir affreux réservée à l'inceste,
 La mort est le seul bien, le seul dieu qui me reste.
 [...]
 J'ai vécu vertueuse, et je meurs sans remords.
 [...]
 Ne plaignez que mon fils, puisqu'il respire encore.
 Prêtres, et vous, Thébains, qui fûtes mes sujets,
 Honorez mon bûcher, et songez à jamais
 Qu'au milieu des horreurs du destin qui m'opprime
 J'ai fait rougir les dieux qui m'ont forcée au crime.

And as for me, I am punishing myself.
 Reserved by a terrible power for incest
 Death is the only blessing, the only god that remains to me.
 [...]
 I lived virtuously, and I am dying without remorse.
 [...]
 Just have pity on my son, since he is still alive.
 Priests, and you, Thebans who are my subjects,
 Honor my pyre, and never think
 That amid the horrors of the destiny that has oppressed me
 I made the gods who forced me to commit the crime blush.

(*Oedipe*, Act 5, sc.6).

Sealing the *grand finale*, these words also epitomize the revolutionary nature of Voltaire's adaptation by making its strident attack on the gods and the clergy more explicit, which is in perfect line with Voltaire's—and, more broadly, the Enlightenment's—anticlericalism and criticism of religion.¹⁷⁶

And what of Oedipus, who should be, in the end, the main character of the play? As a matter of fact, Voltaire's Oedipus plays an almost marginal role at least until the end of the third act, when—as hinted at above—the author restores Sophocles' basic plot with a few variants. Oedipus shortly appears at the beginning as a compassionate king in his identification with his people's

176 On Voltaire's anticlerical criticism in his *Oedipe*, see, e.g., Vrooman (1970) 67–83.

sufferings—perfectly in Sophocles’ style (cf., e.g., Act 1, sc. 3)—and equipped with the same *amour paternelle* (“fatherly love/care”) as his Greek prototype. He proves to be very committed to the search for Laius’ murderer, and, immediately looking for clues, this Oedipus, differently from Sophocles’, asks first Jocasta for help. She, in turn, already mentions the only surviving witness of Laius’ incident, who also happens to be the shepherd in charge of abandoning baby Oedipus—exactly like in Sophocles. In Voltaire, too, this character is called Phorbas, in the footsteps of Seneca’s play. After this, Oedipus almost disappears from the stage. He definitely gains ground close to the end of the tragedy, with the departure of Philoctetes and the new revelation by the High Priest of the identity of Laius’ murderer, as the oracle has expressly mentioned Oedipus. Such a revelation does not come easily: the High Priest in fact ‘replicates’ Tiresias’ reluctance to speak, thus enraging Oedipus. More effectively—I would say—than Tiresias, the High Priest instills in Oedipus a suspicion about which he wants to, and must, enlighten himself by subjecting Jocasta to a series of questions in order to have a detailed account of the incident that had occurred with Laius. Differently from Sophocles, where Jocasta’s story both of Laius’ prophecy, pertaining to his own death, and of the ‘real’ way and place in which he died rings a bell for Oedipus (Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 707–815), in Voltaire it is the words of the High Priest alone that prompt Oedipus to ask Jocasta questions about the place of the incident, the look of Laius, and so forth. Moreover, in Sophocles, Oedipus tells Jocasta the story of his own ‘oracle’ and predicts parricide and incest only to explain the reason for the greater anxiety and fear caused by some details of Jocasta’s report of Laius’ incident—a report that, in Jocasta’s intentions, should persuade Oedipus not to give much credit to the prophet’s words (Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 707–25). In Voltaire, Oedipus ventures into telling Jocasta that story to reciprocate ‘the horrible confidence’ that the queen has offered by revealing ‘the great secret’ of her and Laius’ oracle. Like in Sophocles, so in Voltaire, while explaining his departure from Corinth and wandering from place to place, Oedipus’ story of the predicted parricide and incest eventually accounts for the murder that he committed before arriving in Thebes, and which he now suspects matches Laius’ killing. Voltaire’s Oedipus is expressly confirmed in his suspicion by Phorbas, who, at the outset of the tragedy, has been summoned to provide information about Laius’ incident, and who, without hesitation, recognizes Oedipus as the murderer of Laius. Differently from Sophocles, this recognition marks a deep *caesura* between regicide and the more horrible truth of that crime, as the regicide is actually a parricide leading to the incest. This discovery takes place through the confrontation between the Corinthian Icarus—the counterpart of Sophocles’ messenger from Corinth—and Phorbas. The rest closely follows Sophocles’ play except for the suicide of Jocasta, which—as said before—occurs at the very end, after Oedipus’ self-blinding.

Voltaire's Oedipus shares with Sophocles' his sincere, paternal concerns for his people; furthermore, once he is revealed to be the killer of Laius and plans to leave Thebes, he indeed thinks of a proper replacement for the throne: Philoctetes. Voltaire's Oedipus also shares his Greek model's determination to know, despite the bad presentiments—some kind of subconscious fears—he feels, which in turn makes him close to Seneca's Oedipus as well:

Je devrais bien plutôt, d'accord avec les dieux,
Chérir l'heureux bandeau qui me couvre les yeux.
J'entrevois mon destin; ces recherches cruelles
Ne me découvriront que des horreurs nouvelles.
Je le sais; mais, [...]
Je ne puis demeurer dans cette incertitude;
Le doute en mon malheur est un tourment trop rude;
J'abhorre le fl ambeau dont je veux m'éclairer;
Je crains de me connaître, et ne puis m'ignorer

I really should rather agree with the gods
To cherish the blindfold which covers my eyes.
I perceive my fate: these cruel researches
Will only reveal new horrors to me.
I know it, but [...]
I cannot remain in this uncertainty.
In my misfortune doubt is too harsh a torment.
I abhor the flame with which I want to enlighten myself.
I fear knowing myself, and cannot ignore myself.

(*Oedipe*, Act 5, sc. 2)

Voltaire's *Oedipe* enjoyed immediate success, as is well proved by the burlesque version *Oedipe travesti: Parodie en vers de l'Oedipe de M. de Voltaire* ("Transvestite Oedipus: A Verse Parody of Mr. Voltaire's *Oedipus*"), which opened at the *Théâtre Italien* ("Italian theater") in April 1719, not even a year after the première of Voltaire's play (November 1718).¹⁷⁷ This parodic version was written by a well-known actor of the so-called *Comédie-Italienne* ("Italian Comedy"), Pierre François Biancolelli, called Dominique.¹⁷⁸ Set in a village to the north of Paris, it staged all the clichés—i.e., masks and stock situations—that were typical of the repertoire of the Italian *Commedia dell'arte* ("Comedy/

¹⁷⁷ See, e.g., Macintosh (2009) 78; Funaioli (2012) 179–80; Mazzocut-Mis (2014) 143–6.

¹⁷⁸ For a concise presentation and history of the *Comédie-Italienne* ("Italian Comedy"), see, e.g., Mazzocut-Mis (2014) 143 n. 104.

Theater of the Professional"). Jocasta is Colombina, and Oedipus is Trivelin (a type very similar to the most familiar Arlecchino); the divine disappears: prophecies and oracles are replaced by 'updated' figures of fortune-tellers or 'old-ugly' witches, and Tiresias becomes the village schoolmaster. What provides the backdrop for the parricide is just a comic, drunken brawl, which obviously deprives the event of all its tragic impact and nullifies any horror, and any moral tension. The same applies to the incest, which is seen, in the end, as not such a reprehensible deed. Jocasta/Colombina's death in fact seems rather to be due to some ordinary disquiet, far away from any suicidal thought, as *mais je me trouve mal, tout mon corps s'affaiblit . . .* ("but I do not feel well, my all body grows weaker"),¹⁷⁹ she says to her confidant. And even more ridiculously, Oedipus/Trivelin's self-punishment turns into getting a black eye.

Voltaire's legacy keeps being evident in other 18th-century adaptations of the play by French writers who took up his innovations, such as the multiplication of the characters with a constant presence of the 'confidente'-figure. Mention should be made of two plays by the same title *Oedipe*, respectively by the Jesuit father and dramatist Melchior de Folard (1722) and the playwright Antoine Houdar de la Motte (1730).¹⁸⁰ While embracing some of Voltaire's features, both authors seem to react to the philosopher's anti-religious/clerical criticism by adapting the story to the modern Christian mind. The dichotomy between gods' will/destiny and individual responsibility—an open-ended, excruciating motif that since antiquity has crossed the Oedipus plays—seems to come to a compromising solution: destiny and oracles, which voice gods' will, might doom someone to be a criminal, but that 'someone' is free to choose to be virtuous.¹⁸¹ A certain sense of individual responsibility and, above all, of personal participation in guilt is indeed the prevailing new feature of Folard's and de la Motte's Oedipus.¹⁸² At first, being a syncretic figure which combines the 'king-caring father' of Sophocles and the 'king obsessed by the memory of the oracle' of Seneca, Folard's Oedipus soon turns into a king self-aware of his own portion of responsibility in committing evils: through oracles God does not condemn one to evil, but instead he tries to prevent one from committing evil, for he can see a culpable proclivity toward it. On the ground of this realization,

179 The quotation is from Biancolelli (1731) 39.

180 A list of 18th-century authors, mainly French, who composed an Oedipus play taking up, some of Corneille's and Voltaire's innovations can be found in Bettini/Guidorizzi (2004) 219, and in Huhn/Vöhler (2010) 460.

181 This 'credo' characterizes in particular Folard's *Oedipe*: see Fouletier-Smith (1982).

182 See, e.g., Paduano (2008) 102 with n. 65. Similar features can be found in Tesauro's play, on which above, n. 156.

Folard's Oedipus regrets the actions by which, still without knowing it, he has paved the way for incest and parricide. He feels 'guilty' because (1) he has willingly run the risk of incest to crown his pure ambition for royal power through a wedding—the implication being that he could, however, have chosen not to yield to that ambition; and (2) although warned by the oracle about a killing, by mere imprudence and frivolousness he killed someone (Laius at the cross-road). Folard's Oedipus thus ends up accusing himself as—he admits—he could avoid the crimes he committed: they are not the result of an inescapable destiny, but of his own choices. Such a self-analysis against the potential background of guilt is Folard's biggest innovation. His is a Christianized Oedipus. Jocasta is, instead, still given the more traditional 'anti-gods' mark as she blames the gods if an oracle condemns someone to commit a crime: the god who predicts a crime (thus dooming someone to commit it) is the one who actually commits it. Innovatively, in Folard it is Jocasta who suspects his brother Creon of being the killer of Laius, paradoxically (given her remarks on oracles and gods) on the ground of an oracle demanding the life of a 'descendent from Agenor'¹⁸³ to vindicate Laius' murder. Like in Voltaire—and before him, in Corneille—the oracles become more and more ambiguous. In Folard, the ambiguity is even redoubled as a second oracle is delivered, demanding that a son sacrifice his life for a father. Hence Menoeceus steps forward.¹⁸⁴ The plot thus becomes more intricate and, subsequently, far different from Sophocles' plotline. To save his son, Creon declares himself guilty, but not of Laius' murder; he is guilty since he has prevented the servant Phorbas from revealing the existence of Laius' son, who was supposed to be exposed; being alive, he would make Creon's power—as it seemingly now makes Oedipus' power—illegitimate. From this confession to the revelation of the truth the step is short, as Phorbas recognizes in Oedipus both the killer of Laius and the 'rescued' baby.

The motif of personal responsibility and, subsequently, of guilt is prioritized in de la Motte's play as well. Here the motif expressively involves both Oedipus and Jocasta. While, similarly to Folard's, de la Motte's Oedipus is guilty for yielding to his ambition—which pushed him to abandon his adoptive father¹⁸⁵ and thus set out for his destiny—Jocasta is guilty for neglecting the oracle's warning about bearing a son who, after killing the father, will share her bed; she thus must beware of love. In this play, too, oracles grow peculiarly ambiguous. To save Thebes it is demanded that Laius' murderer be punished and a

183 Agenor, a Phoenician king of Tyre, was the father of Cadmus (see, e.g., Apollodorus, *Library* 3.1.1–2), the founder of Thebes.

184 He too is, in fact, a descendant of Agenor. An influence from Euripides, *Phoenician Women* is likely: see Paduano (2008) 120.

185 In de la Motte the adoptive father is the Corinthian shepherd who saved Oedipus infant.

son of Jocasta die. As for the latter, everyone thinks of Eteocles and Polynices who, here and now, are in competition not for the throne but for sacrificing themselves for the sake of the community. The first part of the oracle, which is consistent with Sophocles' story, represents however a novelty in the context of de la Motte's play: in line with Voltaire's rationalizing effort, to overcome the unlikely and illogical lack of previous investigation into Laius' murder, de la Motte has the witness of Laius' accident tell everybody a made-up story according to which it was a lion who killed Laius. Therefore, that lion is supposed to be found and killed. But when the witness is about to die, he wants Jocasta to know the truth; he gives this task to the shepherd who rescued and adopted baby Oedipus, whom he had, in turn, received, from a woman. This woman is no one but the queen's confidant, the one who was supposed to expose the baby and who, lying, assured Jocasta about the baby's death. Once this truth surfaces, it is Jocasta who wants to know more and subjects the shepherd to questioning until the whole truth is discovered. And it is Jocasta who first discovers the terrible truth of incest and parricide, which she would prefer not to tell to Oedipus. It will be her suicide and a letter left behind that will reveal that same terrible truth to Oedipus, sealing the conclusion of the play with a moral lesson on guilt and god's punishment.

In Folard and de la Motte, as well as in other adaptations of the same century, the religious influence seems to have determined a shift of focus: the political undertone and the often-emphasized incest-motif yield to the responsibility-guilt motif. Similarly, intellectual capability, another important thread of Sophocles' Oedipus, has been less and less highlighted, probably as a consequence of the 'rationalistic' approach to the play: in particular from Voltaire on, that capability is under fire as the slowness through which Oedipus comes to realize the truth would be at odds with his acuity.

The intellectual mark of Oedipus—as it particularly surfaces in the encounter with the Sphinx—is partly 'retrieved' in some revisions of Sophocles' tragedy from the end of the 19th century on.¹⁸⁶ Before that, it seems that the Oedipus play is in eclipse, and, with a few exceptions, the scanty re-elaborations, if any, consistently display a parodic and satiric nature. Such is the case, for instance, of *Der zerbrochne Krug* ("The Broken Jug", 1808) by the German poet Heinrich Von Kleist. Inspired by Sophocles' play, rather than being a close revision, Von Kleist's work is a comedy of self-revelation where the protagonist, Adam, is both the criminal (of a very trivial 'crime': the breaking of a jug) and the judge; but, differently from Oedipus, he is aware of his own guilt from the beginning and tries his hardest during the inquiry to avert the impending discovery. It is

186 Regarding this, see below, e.g., 204–6.

rather a satire of the judicial system, which targets the contemporary, arbitrary use of power, the hypocrisy, and the conformism of bourgeois society.

In line with the parodic trend of the time,¹⁸⁷ a few years later, in 1829, the German poet and dramatist August von Platen wrote a comedy under the title *Der romantische Ödipus* ("The Romantic Oedipus").¹⁸⁸ Characterized by an Aristophanic overtone, the burlesque almost borders on the grotesque: a bat-shaped birthmark replaces the well-known swollen feet and works as a mark of recognition for Jocasta; once the truth comes out, Oedipus buries himself alive rather than blind himself. Some more space is granted here to the Sphinx who asks the travellers to utter a metrically perfect line rather than an answer to her riddle.¹⁸⁹

Within the parodic / burlesque trend characterizing the works inspired by Sophocles' tragedy in the first half of the 19th century, *Edipo* by the Spanish statesman, playwright, and historian Francisco Martínez de la Rosa represents an interesting exception.¹⁹⁰ Published in Paris in 1829, it was performed for the first time a year later, 1830, in Seville. Borrowing, so to say, from Voltaire the character of the High Priest, de la Rosa grants him a fundamental, quasi-protagonistic space as he represents an alternative to royal power. De la Rosa's High Priest not only takes on the roles both of Sophocles' priest, who appears at the very beginning of the play, and of Tiresias; he also acts as repository of divine knowledge, thus knowing, since the beginning, that finding Laius' murderer is the remedy for Thebes' ruin. Differently from Sophocles' priest, this High Priest does not need Oedipus' help: he already knows. Equipped with the power of this divine knowledge, this High Priest moves Oedipus to the background and overshadows his authority. Oedipus does not even appear in the *incipit* of the play, and any time he utters something, his words are belittled and discredited through the High Priest's prompt rectifications. Apparently political power is under criticism: a hypothesis is that, by means of this Oedipus whose

187 Although tragic-comic and parodic adaptations of Sophocles' play will rather characterize the 20th century (see, e.g., Müller [1975] in Macintosh [2009] 161 n. 10, some traces of this trend can be identified far earlier in the 19th century: see, e.g., Macintosh (2009) 161–2; also below, n. 190. For an overview of a 'tragic-comic' Oedipus, with a focus on the 20th century, see Treu (2012). I shall later discuss this kind of adaptation.

188 See Bettini/Guidorizzi (2004) 219–20.

189 It has been observed that in Von Platen's play, Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* becomes the vessel of his literary polemic against the Romantic dissolution of the classical world; his is thus rather a literary satire with the 'Hyper-romantic' K. Immermann and H. Heine being the targets.

190 Within this parodic trend, mention should be made of *Oedipus Tyrannus or Swellfoot the Tyrant* (1820), a political satire against King George IV, by the well-known English Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley: see, e.g., White (1921); Erkelenz (1996); for a concise overview, also Macintosh (2014) 11: 1124–5.

authority is called into question and constantly counteracted by the religious one, the author would try to persuade the current King Fernando VII to renounce absolutism.¹⁹¹ Another specific characteristic of de la Rosa's play is more in line with the French dramatis Folard and de la Motte: de la Rosa too, in fact, highlights the motif of personal / individual responsibility as far as the parricide is concerned, so that the juvenile intemperance and rebellious disposition of de la Rosa's Oedipus is what makes him responsible and guilty. According to Phorbas' report, Laius, the old king, asked for the right of way in a friendly manner, but the impetuous youth quickly lost his patience and killed him. This contrast between the elder's authority and patience and the youth's rebellious temperament, which mirrors the typical generational conflict between a father and a son, generates a symbolic, consciously realized parricide overlapping the real, unwittingly realized one.¹⁹²

As mentioned, the Oedipus play seems to be eclipsed in the second half of the 19th century and to resurface mostly toward the end of the century. Likely in response to the representations of the story in the visual arts of the time,¹⁹³ a specific motif is singled out in the new revisitations: Oedipus' encounter with the Sphinx. With this new interest in that episode and in the figure itself of the Sphinx, the motif of Oedipus' intellectual acumen, which has been overshadowed for a long while, re-emerges along with a theme profoundly informing the whole story: the mysterious presence of destiny in human life, and the 'mysterious riddle' of human life itself. Among poems referring in particular to these themes,¹⁹⁴ mention should be made of *Oedipus* (1896) by probably the most prominent Greek poet of the late 19th century and early 20th century, i.e., Konstatine P. Kavafy. Inspired by the painting of Gustave Moreau, *Oedipe et le Sphinx* ("Oedipus and the Sphinx," 1864),¹⁹⁵ the poem calls attention to Oedipus' joyless victory over the Sphinx, as the hero is aware of the perils that are in store in the days to come: the monster will re-emerge in his life with much more complex and difficult riddles that he will not be able to solve any more, for the questions that destiny poses for mortals are unanswerable.¹⁹⁶

At the turn of the 20th century the play *OEdipe et le Sphinx* ("Oedipus and the Sphinx") by the French eclectic writer Joseph (or Joséphin) Péladan stands out

191 This is in particular the view of Fernández (2006–2007). On de la Rosa's play, see, also, Paduano (2008) 124–8.

192 Paduano (2008) 126.

193 Regarding this, see below, 246–8; 250–4; 255–8.

194 For a concise list of these poems, see Huhn/Vöhler (2010) 460–1.

195 See below, 252–3.

196 On this poem, see, e.g., Markantonatos (2007) 244–5.

among the other re-elaborations of Sophocles' drama that highlight the figure of the Sphinx.¹⁹⁷ First published in 1897, the première of a slightly revised version occurred at the Théâtre Antique d'Orange (Paris) in August 1903. From a dramaturgical point of view the play diverges completely both from Sophocles' tragedy and from most of the subsequent adaptations that have been discussed so far. Péladan's play, in fact, stages the essential past events of Oedipus' life rather than their rediscovery through the vigorous questioning conducted by the hero. In other words, the parricide, the victory over the Sphinx, and the marriage-incest are acted out—and in that linear sequence—rather than painfully 'exhumed'. Péladan's three-acts play starts at the crossroad where, as is well known, the murder of Laius occurred. Laius is characterized as aggressive and haughty. *La voix/force du sang*—a motif that variously appears in several preceding French revisitations—here surfaces at the moment of the fighting: it is Oedipus who 'hears', but does not listen to, that secret voice. Continuing on his 'path', Oedipus arrives at Thebes, which is in distress over the king's death and the presence of the Sphinx. The latter seems to be what most concerns the Thebans. They in fact exert pressure on Jocasta, urging her to stop any investigation about Laius' murder and to rather offer herself, and the scepter, to the one who would face the monster and win over it. This *aut-aut* demand by the Thebans originates from the ambiguous response that Tiresias has given them when they asked him to reveal the identity both of Laius' killer and of the defeater of the Sphinx. Revealing the identity of the one guilty of Laius' death—Tiresias states—would preclude Thebes' liberation from the monster: Jocasta must choose. As Oedipus arrives at Thebes and asks what is afflicting the town so much, he comes to know about the Sphinx and the reward promised to its defeater. Immediately he undertakes that challenge. For Oedipus the *chance* to marry Jocasta, offered as a compensation, means (ironically!) to finally free himself from the fear of entering the incestuous marriage predicted long ago by the oracle of Apollo: *Apollon avait dit que je féconderais ma mère, / et voici un hymen qui s'offre, digne de moi* ("Apollo said that I would impregnate my mother, and here comes a marriage, worthy of me," *Oedipe et le Sphinx*, Act 2, sc. 9).¹⁹⁸ This liberating and worthy marriage is the motivation for Oedipus' heroic willingness to face the Sphinx: *La pure volonté l'emporte donc sur la fatalité* ("The pure willpower thus prevails over

197 On Péladan's play, see Verna (2000) 313–44; Morales Peco (2002) 361–73; Edmunds (2006) 111–3; Paduano (2008) 128–31, and, more recently, Ieranò (2012). My discussion is mainly drawn from Paduano and Ieranò.

198 The quotation is from Péladan (1903).

the destiny," *Oedipe et le Sphinx*, Act 2, sc. 9), Oedipus says upon his resolution to face the monster.

The genuine and strong determination of Sophocles' Oedipus to escape what destiny had reserved for him seems here to turn into a genuine and firm faith in his own *volonté* ("willpower"). For Péladan's Oedipus, resigning himself to destiny and losing hope are (ironically!) an act of impiety, as he is confident that, in the end, the gods "are just". Péladan's play is mostly about this Oedipus' confidence that he can remain innocent and triumph over evil, which is represented by the Sphinx; the entire play, in fact, is mostly about his articulated encounter with the Sphinx. In Péladan the 'guilty' component of the traditional oxymoronic essence of Oedipus is to be dismissed, in order to let the 'savior' one prevail. This is the result of the peculiar adaptation to which Péladan subjected the hero and the monster. Consistent with the Parisian mystic-esoteric environment of the time, with which Péladan was very familiar,¹⁹⁹ Oedipus becomes the redeemer,²⁰⁰ the chosen one, put in charge by the gods to defy corruption, which is embodied by the Sphinx. With the Sphinx being seen as the hotbed of any human wretchedness, by destroying her, Oedipus redeems not only Thebes but, symbolically, the whole of humanity.²⁰¹

Péladan's Sphinx also encompasses characteristics that are in line with the cultural-artistic trend of the time, namely Decadentism and Symbolism. That hybrid monster thus comes to symbolize two specific ideas: the *Inconnu* ("the Unknown"), i.e., the mystery of life and cosmos—a mystery that only Oedipus can penetrate, and the erotic seduction of the so-called *femme fatale*.²⁰² Oedipus' encounter with the Sphinx as a symbol of man questioning the Unknown is indeed the idea behind several artistic representations of the time, which recover and emphasize the intellectual brightness-motif of the original Oedipus. And since she was also an icon of seduction by the fatal female, which the culture of the time held dear, her defeat emphasizes the stainlessness of the hero, the 'saint' and mystic knight who, although involved in the most terrible crimes, stands before the Sphinx's temptations both by trusting in his pure *volonté* to prevail over destiny and by believing in his redemptive mission.

199 Regarding this, see, in particular, Ieranò (2012) 196–7.

200 According to Ieranò (2012) 290, Péladan superimposed Christ on the Oedipus figure, which should not come as a surprise, given that since antiquity Christian iconography re-used iconographic themes associated with Oedipus' myth: see De Maio (2001).

201 See Nissim (1989) 236.

202 See Ieranò (2012) 198–9; 207–8.

Interest in the episode of Oedipus' encounter with the Sphinx continues in a considerably way to characterize the literary adaptations of Sophocles' play throughout the first half of the 20th century and beyond. But a new, almost revolutionary—at least for the time—interpretation of Oedipus' story overlaps, starting from a letter of October 15, 1897, which the well-known founder of the modern psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), sent to his friend Wilhelm Fliess. This letter contains the very first statement of what, soon afterward, will be called the “Oedipus Complex”.²⁰³

No one can deny the centrality of Freud's influential view of Sophocles' play. His appropriation of Oedipus' myth is arguably one of the most important among the many, varied 20th-century ones; at the same time, his theory has become one of the most often discussed and contentious issues of modern psychology and literature. Freud's acclaim and appreciation have in fact been not immune to strong criticism by a number of scholars of different fields.²⁰⁴ The ‘universality’ feature and the ‘gendered myopia’²⁰⁵ are among the most debatable characteristics of Freud's “Oedipus Complex”. Taking over the audience's perspective, for Freud Oedipus is the one who has acted out what *all* would dream of doing and have, indeed, at least once, dreamt of doing. The story thus expresses a universal pathological condition, or, to say it better, a “repressed universal conflict”,²⁰⁶ revolving around the mother-child-father triangle, as the ‘Complex’ refers to the totality of unconscious impulses, fixations, fears and defence mechanisms that center both on the infantile incestuous

203 It is a letter dated 15 October 1897, which can be find in Bollack (1994).

204 See, e.g., the interesting, critical review by Ahmed (2012). The influence exerted by Freud's psychoanalytic interpretation is such that one certainly cannot avoid mentioning it. Despite the partial eclipse which it underwent starting from the second half of the 20th century (see, e.g., Hall [2004] 36–7), Freud's appropriation of the play remains an ‘unescapable’ milestone. At the same time, for the purpose and the specific angle of this volume, providing a full account of the manifold discussions, responses, and refutations that have ‘surrounded’ Freud's “Oedipus Complex” ever since it was formulated would be out of place, considering the large number of appropriate scholarly works devoted to it. Hence I shall confine myself to providing a brief overview as a ‘ground’ for the discussion of the literary, artistic, dramatic and cinematic revisitations of Sophocles' play which, explicitly or not, display a Freudian vein, and I shall refer the readers to some essential bibliography on the topic. For a concise discussion of the theory, including criticism and reactions, see, e.g., Huhn/Vöhler (2010) 466–8; Armstrong (2014) I: 556–9. For a more detailed study, see, e.g., Rudnytsky (1987). For other specific scholarship, see the notes below.

205 See, e.g., Kulish/Holtzman (2008), on which Camden (2011), who offers a significantly critical review; see, also, Leonard (2013).

206 See Simon/Blass (1991).

desire to marry the mother and on the infantile desire to kill the father, such desires which everyone can sense:²⁰⁷

His [sc. Oedipus'] fate moves us only because it could have been our own as well, because at our birth the oracle pronounced the same curse upon us as it did on him. It was perhaps ordained that we should all of us turn our first sexual impulses towards our mother, our first hatred and violent wishes against our father. Our dreams convince us of it. King Oedipus, who killed his father Laius and married his mother Jocasta, is only the fulfillment of our childhood wish ...²⁰⁸

These words prove how Freud has universalized Oedipus' fate, first, by turning the Greek destiny and oracle into a *Materialisationen der inneren Notwendigkeit* ("Materialization of the inner necessity"),²⁰⁹ i.e., into a compulsion that all have and that manifests itself in the form of an unconscious emotional mechanism, and, subsequently, by transferring the compelling force of the gods' will to Nature. Furthermore, some form of gendered myopia, which is claimed by some critics, becomes especially apparent here. What of the female component of the audience?

The well known and highly criticized result of Freud's interpretation is to make Sophocles' Oedipus *oedipal*, i.e., affected by the complex named after him. Classicists know well that Sophocles' tragedy is something other than the 'acting out' of Freud's "Oedipus Complex". The painful self-investigation that Sophocles' hero undertakes, and which drives him to delve into the past all the way to his infancy, might certainly be seen—as Freud and others have indeed seen—as an analogue of the clinical process of self-discovery which the analysand undertakes in psychoanalysis: the patient must delve into his past and confront her/his own childhood to see and understand her/his

207 Within the developments after Freud, one of the major revisions of Freudian theory has been made by the Austrian-British psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1882–1960) who targeted precisely Freud's thought about Oedipal hatred against the father: there would be, according to Klein, an 'early Oedipus phase', beginning at the birth itself of the child, when his earliest hostility would be directed against the mother rather than the father: see, e.g., Borovecki-Jakovljević/Mataić (2005) 353–4. With reference to Oedipal hostility/hatred against the father, a more sympathetic interpretation is suggested by Jonathan Lear, professor of philosophy at the University of Chicago. In his persistent quest for the truth, Oedipus overlooked the most important fact about his life, i.e., his parents' cruel abandonment of him. His investigation would be his way of not facing his own victimhood, by avoiding to look the truth of his abandonment in the face: see Lear (1998).

208 Freud (1999) 203.

209 Quotation from Huhn/Vöhler (2010) 467.

adult self. And analogue is one of the ways in which reception works.²¹⁰ But this does not make Sophocles' Oedipus *oedipal*. To appreciate and reach the true meaning of the ancient tragedy, we should consider Freud's as one of the many forms, influential though it may be, in which the play 'has been received', rather than as 'the' revelation of the true essence of the ancient play itself.

As hinted at above, it goes without saying that Freud's 'shadow' has loomed large on the 20th-century rewriting and reproposing (in other forms of art, too) of Sophocles' play. The very first manifestation of this is the *ultrafreudiano* ("Ultrafreudian") Oedipus of *Ödipus und die Sphinx* ("Oedipus and the Sphinx"), a three-act play by the Austrian eclectic writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874–1929). Composed in 1906, it was premiered on September 25, 1910, in the Musikfesthall in Munich.²¹¹ It had been written as the first part of a trilogy that should have included the author's versions of Sophocles' two Oedipus plays, i.e., *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus*. With the latter not having been realized, the trilogy remained unfinished.²¹² While the plotline and the structure clearly show an influence by Péladan's play, the conception is all but Freudian. Like Péladan's work, it stages the background events of Sophocles' play, as it includes Oedipus' fatal encounter with Laius at a crossroad and culminates in the incestuous marriage after the victory over the Sphinx. They are acted out in their linear, chronological sequence; therefore, like in Péladan, there is not a retrospective, self-discovery-inquiring 'journey'. In Péladan Oedipus' intellectual dimension is 'exhumed' as the hero questions, challenges, and—in his own way—wins over the mystery, the Unknown; in Hofmannsthal there is not a drop of that intellectual brightness left behind. All is charged with Freudian ideas.²¹³ "The sexual drives, the infantile longing for patricide and incest, as envisaged by Freud, are symptomatically portrayed in the Hofmannsthal version," to the point that "The mythical world [...] becomes the screen on which the psychological events are projected."²¹⁴

A key characteristic of this adaptation, which inevitably 'summons' and establishes a connection with Freud's interpretation, is the centrality of dream and the *Traumdeutung* ("Interpretation of dreams"):²¹⁵ Apollo's oracle becomes a dream that Oedipus experiences in Delphi as he narrates it to his

210 See Hardwick (2003) 9.

211 For the production history, see Macintosh (2009) 102–3, 111.

212 On this adaptation, see, in general, Paduano (2008) 133–48; Macintosh (2009) 110–1.

213 About Freud's influence on Hofmannsthal, see Hamburger (1961); Urban (1978).

214 The quotation is from Huhn/Vöhler (2010) 561.

215 See Paduano (2008) esp. 133–4.

old, loyal servant Phoinix; while Apollo's priestess, the Pythia, is the one who provides the *Traumdeutung*. The way in which Phoinix and Oedipus discuss the dream, along with the ensuing concerns of the hero, evokes another fundamental principle of Freud's theory pertaining to dreams: the dream is essential for having the dreamer's identity and personality surface. Whereas, in fact, Phoinix is confident that Oedipus is 'pure' and 'honest', both when awake and when asleep and dreaming, Oedipus perceives that there is a part of his being which is unknown to Phoinix, and of which Oedipus himself was unaware and unconscious before the dream, a dream that he appropriately calls *Lebenstraum* ("Dream of [his] life"). Indeed, Oedipus excludes neither the possibility of committing the parricide nor the possibility of committing incest. The first can objectively occur in Oedipus' view, considering the endogenous tendency to violence characterizing his lineage. As for the incest, Oedipus does not exclude it either, for he confesses to Phoinix that he has never touched a woman only because he would find any woman inadequate in comparison with the paradigm of 'womanly perfection', which to him—and to any men, according to a widespread cultural stereotype—is personified by the mother. Indeed, Oedipus falls in love, at first glance, with a woman who is portrayed as a mother—rather than, for instance, as a widow and queen—and, as we know, actually is his mother.²¹⁶ Moreover, an oxymoronic, horrible-tender maternal gaze is what Oedipus catches in the Sphinx when the latter, recognizing Oedipus at his arrival, threw herself into the cliff.²¹⁷ Interestingly, the monster recognizes the hero as 'the dreamer', which adds to the Freudian overtone both of the characterization of Oedipus and of the overall spirit of the play.

The founder of modern psychoanalysis has certainly contributed to spreading a special interest in the Oedipus figure, particularly in the first decades of the 20th century, especially in France. In the so-called 'Inter-War' period, approximately between 1920 and 1930, there occurs *une véritable oedipémie* ("a real epidemic of 'Oedipus'"), as the French dramatist André Gide stated to refer, by playing with words, to the current proliferation of rewritings of Sophocles' play.²¹⁸ A varied range of factors accounts for the unprecedented interest in the Oedipus play in France,²¹⁹ including the important turning point marked by the French

216 On Hofmannsthal's Jocasta, see Paduano (2004) 142.

217 Regarding the association of the Sphinx with Jocasta, or more generally with a maternal figure, see Delcourt (1944) 131; Van der Sterren (1976) 103–5; Rudnytsky (1987) 259; Paduano (2008) 147 with n. 22.

218 The quotation is from Cocteau (1959) 211.

219 For the specific historical and socio-cultural factors that had an impact on such an interest, see Macintosh (2009) 138–45; Massa (2013) 257–64.

translation of the entire *corpus* of the three Greek tragic playwrights by the poet Charles-Marie Leconte de Lisle (1818–1894),²²⁰ and the diffusion of Freud's works made available precisely in translation.²²¹ While the first made it possible that ordinary, non-specialist, people, too, would start knowing and familiarizing themselves with the ancient plays, the second turned Oedipus into a suitable embodiment of the dramatists' personal issues and concerns. *Oedipe* (1927–1932)²²² by the French playwright André Gide (1859–1951) testifies well to this.

Gide was one of the founders of the periodical *Nouvelle Revue Française*, which contributed to the circulation of Freud's works in the Parisian literary society; but he also engaged with Freud's thought in his own literary production. Gide's has not, however, proved to be an unquestioning friend of Freud. Indeed, from an initial enthusiasm he shifted to hard criticism, granting him one merit only:²²³ to expose the bourgeois prig of the time to 'certain' ideas and topics, defying taboos. Gide's *Oedipe* is Freudian in this specific perspective: reacting to, and getting over, the ideas of subconscious, pathologic repression, guilt-feeling, etc. (all things so familiar to Freudian thought), his Oedipus is a defyer of taboos, a self-asserting person, and a fighter for individual freedom, in particular for a freedom from social and religious conventions, from the bourgeois hypocrisy of the time, and from the family ties that entrapped him. He was indeed happy to be a 'bastard', once this truth came out, and not to be bound to his father and to emulating him.²²⁴

Quite ironically, we might say, Gide revises and adapts exactly the *par excellence* symbol of the Freudian theories in order to 'corrode' their fundamentals. Regarding this, one of most significant trait of Gide's Oedipus is certainly his reaction to the discovery of the incest. It is nothing particularly shocking for Gide's Oedipus, who, in fact, just accepts it, without any problem, before a scandalized Creon. What is more, the incest, the 'forbidden fruit', is the *fil rouge* of the entire play. Indeed, an incestuous desire consciously surfaces in his two sons, Polynices and Eteocles, toward their sisters.²²⁵ In particular Polynices

220 See Massa (2013) 259–60 with nn. 9; 10.

221 See, e.g., Massa (2013) 263–4.

222 The writing process was quite long: starting it in 1927, after changing its title from *Nouvel Oedipe* to *Conversion d'Oedipe*, and finally to just *Oedipe*, Gide concluded this three-acts play in 1930. Published in 1931, its première occurred only in 1932, at the Théâtre de l'Avenue in Paris, marking the return of Gide to the stage after about thirty years. On Gide's adaptation, in general see Paduano (2008) 148–54; Macintosh (2009) 143–5; Massa (2013) 265–72.

223 On Gide and Freud, see Steel (1977); (2000).

224 See Paduano (2008) 150–1 with n. 30.

225 Although Gide's play resembles Sophocles' one, adhering to the wide-angled versions characterizing the adaptations' contemporary trend, Gide enlarged the plot by including Oedipus' and Jocasta's four children: see, e.g., Macintosh (2009) 143.

mirrors his father's rebellion against the yoke of religion that limits the freedom to think and act freely. Good and evil are nothing but words, says Polynices, who dares ask whether it is forbidden to marry a sister, and, together with Eteocles, is looking for a 'phrase' which would allow him to have intercourse with his sister. This 'multiplication' of the incestuous desire, along with its unproblematic acceptance, aims at targeting the hypocrisy of the social conventions and of the rules to which religion and bourgeois morality—i.e., the current repressive Catholic orthodoxy represented by Tiresias—have subjugated man.²²⁶ At the end, Gide's Oedipus blinds himself not out of self-punishment; his is an act of desperate courage, an act he performs in order to preserve his freedom and independence. It is a defiant gesture of free will against the merciless divine authority whose power on earth—as typified by Tiresias—is based on fear. Significantly, even the pious Antigone renounces the church at the end of the play, finding her god in her heart and in the company of her atheist father. Like in Sophocles, in Gide, too, Oedipus casts himself out. In Gide, cutting any ties that would bind him to his past is a necessity for preserving his freedom. Oedipus' departure is another act of rebellion as well, in front of the moral baseness of the society typified by the hypocrisy of Creon. The latter, in fact, does not hesitate to withdraw the edict banning Oedipus as soon as he comes to know of the blessing that the land preserving Oedipus' body would enjoy. Projected toward the future, Gide's Oedipus will continue on his path, remaining unstained.

Within the *oedipémie* overflowing France in the Inter-war period, another distinctly Freudian elaboration of Sophocles' play is *La machine infernale* ("The Infernal Machine") by the dramatist Jean Cocteau (1889–1963). His interest in Oedipus' story marks his literary production, from the early collection of poems by the title *La danse de Sophocle* ("The Dance of Sophocles") in 1912 to the translation of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* in 1925, from the writing of the libretto for the operatic version/oratorio *Oedipus Rex* by Igor Stravinsky in 1927²²⁷ to the writing of *La machine infernale* in 1932, whose première occurred in 1934 at the Théâtre Loius-Jouvet in Paris.²²⁸

La machine infernale consists of four acts; out of them, only the last one closely follows the plotline of Sophocles' play, as it contains the traditional

226 It has been observed that as Gide's is also, but by any means exclusively, a self-referential Oedipus as he transferred his life's issues—in particular his conflictual, if not adverse, relationship with the current Catholic orthodoxy—into the character: Massa (2013) 268–9. Regarding this, see also Paduano (2008) 15–2; Macintosh 144.

227 Regarding this see below, 259–61.

228 Information on the première and early production history are from Massa (2013) 275. On Cocteau's adaptation, see, in general, Paduano (2008) 154–60; Macintosh (2009) 140–3; Anderson (2012) 606–7; Massa (2013) 272–80.

revelation of Oedipus' identity, the suicide of Jocasta and the self-blinding of the king. The previous three acts dramatize the preliminary events, i.e., the arrival of Oedipus at Thebes, his encounter with the Sphinx, and, in consequence, his marriage with Jocasta. Freudian is Cocteau's specific interest—if not an obsession—in the incest, which, for its taboo-nature and its potential threat to healthy and genuine family relationships, would allow him to explore and uncover the secret abysses of the stereotypical bourgeois families of the time.²²⁹ From the beginning the author subtly calls the attention of the audience and readers to the potential power that repressed incestuous drives exert on the main characters. Indeed, the play opens with a clear borrowing from the Shakespearean *Hamlet*, as the ghost of Oedipus' father appears, more than once, to deliver an alert, in his attempt to keep Jocasta from the incestuous marriage. Given that the message is meant to be for the wife rather than for the son—as it actually is in *Hamlet*—this scene might represent Cocteau's reaction, tinged with parodic tone, to Freud's reading of Hamlet's Oedipal relationship with his father and mother.²³⁰

It is, in fact, through Jocasta that the incest theme is fully explored. While in Gide Oedipus is the one who shows no problem with the incest, in Cocteau it is Jocasta who, without any inhibition, displays a peculiar sexual fascination with younger men—who might be her sons—thus revealing some kind of incestuous drive. And, once again, this is apparent from the beginning: Jocasta, still mourning for Laius, goes to the ramparts of the city to interrogate the guard who reported the appearance of King Laius' ghost. She is rather immediately attracted to that young guard despite the fact that he reminds her of the son she might have had, the son who was abandoned to death. Soon afterward, as she is absorbed in her thoughts of her non-existent son and imagines his victory over the Sphinx, she ventures into the claim that the boys will marry their mother once they are grown, a claim that she seems to approve. While in Gide, as seen above, Oedipus' unproblematic acceptance of incestuous desires is out of the author's implied criticism of the Catholic and bourgeois morality, in Coacteau Jocasta's indulgence in sexual fascination with younger men has

229 Regarding this, mention should be made of Cocteau's other two works, whose titles clearly reflect that specific, obsessive interest: his novel *Les Enfants terribles* ("The Terrible Children," 1929), and his later play *Les Parents terribles* ("The Terrible Parents," 1938): see, e.g., Massa 92013) 273.

230 Anderson (2012) 606 with n. 11. For a concise overview on the unmistakable borrowing from *Hamlet* in Cocteau's play, both in the *incipit* and elsewhere, see also Massa (2013) 276–7. For a detailed study about the relationship between Oedipus and Hamlet in Freud's wake, see Jones (1954).

a specific psychological origin, as the wedding night scene in Act 3 reveals: in her bedroom Jocasta has kept the exposed baby's cradle, as a constant reminder of her loss;²³¹ exposing her baby has caused a hole in her motherly heart, and has left her emotionally scarred and overwhelmed by guilt. Significantly, although this Jocasta expects Oedipus to appreciate her as a woman, she repeatedly 'mothers' him, most likely to compensate for the loss of her baby boy. And it is the mother who prevails over the woman and wife until the very end, when, after committing suicide, Jocasta turns into a ghost, a ghost which maternally will guide and accompany the blind Oedipus in his exile, along with Antigone. Ironically, it should be noted, while the message of Laius' ghost was an attempt to impede Jocasta's incest, it succeeded only in nurturing Jocasta's maternal/incestuous desire for a younger man. This ironic outcome highlights the cruelty of destiny and of the gods emblemized by "the infernal machine": it is the divine, inescapable snare by which men are trapped, no matter what; it is almost a sadistic game that gods have created at the expense of Oedipus for their own entertainment. As the spring of this infernale machine slowly unwinds—as the prologue explains—the characters are led by their confused desires deeper into the trap and closer to their inevitably tragic end.

And what of Oedipus in this adaptation? Cocteau's Oedipus has little, if any, ethical depth; he is completely unheroic, a vain man, self-centered and interested only in achieving glory and in boasting of it; he does not have any of the intellectual prowess of Sophocles' hero: his defeat of the Sphinx is just a mere farce. Indeed, he does not solve the riddle; it is the Sphinx who voluntarily gives him the answer to her riddle, hoping he will yield to her seduction and return her love. Oedipus just has to repeat *verbatim* the answer, thus pretending to have overcome the 'test'. And he kills the Sphinx only to have a trophy (i.e., her body) to display in Thebes and thus to get his reward: the queen, the kingdom, and the glory—empty though it might be.

It is significant that both main French re-elaborations of Sophocles' play, i.e., Gide's *Oedipe* and Cocteau's *La machine infernale*, while conveying Freudian significances, betray, at the same time, an intention of being over Freud, as both seem to aim at updating a character and a story that started to become unsuitable, or, to say it better, that would no longer be adequate for the needs

231 On this scene, its psychoanalytical nuance, and the criticism it raised, see Macintosh (2009) 141–2.

and taste of the time. Indeed, with a few exceptions,²³² there seems to be a crisis in the reception history of this Sophoclean tragedy: from the late '30s on, its place is taken over by another play, still belonging to the so-called Theban cycle, i.e., *Antigone*.²³³ Notoriously Oedipus' daughter becomes the 'datum point' as a champion of a 'new' issue, whose awareness seems to have started being raised from the Nazis era on: the respect of human rights and individual freedom, above all—yet not exclusively—in the context of totalitarian regimes.²³⁴

With this said, from the mid-20th century on, it is nevertheless possible to find interesting adaptations of Sophocles' masterpiece, whether in the form of a play, or of different literary genres, either in serious or parodic tones. As for the potential parodic underpinning of this Sophoclean play, interestingly, starting exactly from the mid of the 20th century, *Oedipus the King* became particularly attractive for dramatists of an 'exotic' geographical area: the Middle East. Arab dramatists, and especially the Egyptians ones, have in fact found in *Oedipus the King* both a source of inspiration for producing Arab tragedy through imitation and a 'breeding ground' for political satire.²³⁵ As the latter observation implies, the Arab/Egyptian dramatic tradition has endorsed the parodic touch that has already been noticed above in other rewritings. A parodic/comedic tonality is, in fact, what seems to essentially, and commonly, characterize the 'Arab Oedipus', such a 'turn upside down' that, while culminating in the Egyptian writer Ali Salim's *The Comedy of Oedipus: You're the One Who Killed the Beast* (1969–1970), has a parallel in Von Kleist's *Der zerbrochne Krug* ("The Broken Jug", 1808) within the western dramatic system.²³⁶ The persistent parodic/farcical tonality of the Arab/Egyptian rewriting is mostly due to the cultural differences and idiosyncratic features of the Arab world compared

232 The exceptions mainly concern works which draw on Oedipal motifs rather than being actual adaptations of the ancient play: see below, 240–6.

233 About the crisis of Oedipus and replacement by Antigone, see, e.g., Beltrametti (2013) 224–31.

234 Even the barely acknowledged and understood human right to choose to die: see Lauriola (2014; 2015). The adaptations of the Antigone figure, which highlight her emblematic role to fight for the respect of human rights, and the related bibliography are vast. I would thus let myself refer directly to the *Antigone* chapter in this volume.

235 See, e.g., Carlson (2004). The special issue of *Documenta Jaargang*, xxii.4, edited by Decreus/Kolk, published in 2004, consists of contributions, including Carlson's, fully devoted to Arabic adaptations. My discussion is much in debt to these contributions, as I shall detail below. On the subject, see also Carlson (2005); Mahfouz (2012).

236 About Von Kleist's play, see above, 202–3.

to the so-called western civilization.²³⁷ The Muslim perception of fate/destiny is such that it makes unacceptable both the Greek perception of 'malignant/perfidious' fate and the Greek view of the relationship between human beings and the divine. This in turn has made it difficult for Arab people to understand Aristotle's concept of the tragic flaw. No Arab dramatist, in fact, has written a tragedy in the Aristotelian sense. Arab dramatists rather excel in 'trans-adapting' Greek or western, mostly Shakespearean, tragedies, or in producing melodramas.²³⁸ A lack of a genuine tragedy in this world might also be ascribed to "the tendency of Arabs to be very emotional and to dislike the portrayal of suffering of great people on the stage."²³⁹

With all of this being considered, the Arab Oedipus does display a variety of perspectives on Sophocles' masterpiece that are worth mentioning. The very first modern treatment of Oedipus' story in Arab/Egyptian dramatic literature is the work of one of the 20th-century Arabic world's most known dramatists, i.e., Tawfiq Al-Hakim's *King Oedipus*, published in 1949.²⁴⁰ In the same year, another adaptation by the Islamic intellectual Ali Ahmad Bakathir appears under the title *The Tragedy of Oedipus*. Two other rewritings follow after a few years, namely: *The Return of the Absent* by Fawzi Fahmi (1968), and *The Comedy of Oedipus: You're the One Who Killed the Beast* by Ali Salim (1970).²⁴¹ True to their parodic overtone, each one reflects a certain historical period and is evocative of specific political events.

In his *King Oedipus* Al-Hakim programmatically tries to reconcile Arab traditional culture and the concept of Greek Tragedy by interpreting the story in harmony with Islam. To this end, Al-Hakim overcomes the difficulty that the struggle between man and (malignant-) fate/destiny poses to Islamic mentality, as Islamic fatalism is in contradiction with the Greek concept resulting in the defeat of man by divine Fate.²⁴² The author humanizes Oedipus's story, replacing the struggle with fate with a struggle between fact, i.e., "the subjective

237 Regarding this see, in particular, Carlson (2004); Mahfouz (2012) esp. 171–4.

238 Mahfouz (2012) 172–3.

239 Fayzo (1985) 114.

240 On this play see Carlson (2004) 368–70; Etman (2004) 294–6; Mahfouz (2012) 174–8.

241 The four plays mentioned above are unanimously seen as the most notable examples of the Arab adaptation of Sophocles' play. Mention should be made of Walid Ikhlas's *Oedipus: A Modern Tragedy* (1981) as well. For the bibliography pertaining to all of these four Arab adaptations, see above, nn. 235, 240; also Almohanna (2010) 1–2 with n. 9.

242 Islamic belief lies in the middle: there is neither unescapable obligation/necessity (destiny) nor absolute free will; man is responsible in that he is at least partly free-willed: see, e.g., Carlson (2004) 368–9; Etman (2004) 295–6.

reality of the heart,” and truth, i.e., “the objective truth of the intellect.”²⁴³ Oedipus’ and Jocasta’s love and Oedipus’ achievement are “the subjective reality of the hearth,” while Oedipus’ discovery of the truth of his past (and thus parentage) forms “the objective truth of the intellect.” Upon Oedipus’ discovery of the truth, the struggle becomes an inner conflict/dilemma:

What a destiny! I am a hero because I killed a beast they claimed had wings. I am a criminal because I killed a man they showed to be my true father [...] I am neither a hero nor a criminal [...]

(*King Oedipus*, p. 101).²⁴⁴

These are the words of a hero’s bitter soliloquy, whose tragedy—up to the moment of his discovery of an even more terrible truth—has been to consciously live imprisoned in a web of lies that conspiracies and corrupt priests have fabricated for him: “I am just another individual,” he, in fact, claims, “upon whom the people have cast their fictions. And heaven its decrees” (*King Oedipus*, p. 101). Oedipus’ action has thus been driven not by a malignant Fate/God, but by a scheming man, the priest Tiresias, who first ‘blinded’ Laius’ mind with the oracle of a murderous son, and then turned Oedipus into a hero, transforming his victory over an ordinary lion into an encounter with a terrible beast asking a riddle which Tiresias himself invented. Tiresias plays the role of a political manipulator whose schemes aimed at destroying the royal natural lineage to replace it with a system that would accept the most deserving and heroic person as a leader, no matter what his background was. This makes clearer in which sense Al-Hakim’s play is a ‘human version’ of the Greek tragedy, as it emphasizes human and not divine operations. Oedipus is victim of human operations although, consistently with the Islamic mentality, he admits his portion of responsibility, as he confesses and recognizes his errors. And once all the truth is discovered, his human limitation surfaces in his inability to break with the past and to reject an incestuous marriage. His self-blinding and self-banishment is a reaction to the death of his love, Jocasta—who, like the Greek one, commits suicide—rather than to the revelations of the truth.

The innovative ‘scheming’ trait by the likewise innovative figure of Tiresias would suggest a political reading. It has been argued that it would represent a political parody of some of the most important political events in modern Egypt, happening six years earlier, in February 1942, when British troops

²⁴³ The quotations are from Hutchins (1981) 7. On Al-Hakim’s ‘humanization’ of Oedipus, see Carlson (2004) 369–70; Mahfouz (2012) 174 and *passim*.

²⁴⁴ The quotations and page numbers of Al-Hakim’s play are from Carlson (2005).

besieged the palace of the current king (king Farouk), forcing him to appoint a Wafdist government.²⁴⁵ Oedipus would represent the latter, whose mistake was to claim and reach the leadership (a legitimate leadership) through the machinations and threats of force of a wicked enemy of the country, i.e., the occupying British, the counterpart of Tiresias. By doing so he thus forfeited both that legitimacy and the support of the people.

A more direct socio-political connotation characterizes the other Arab Oedipus play which appeared in the same year, i.e., in 1949: *The Tragedy of Oedipus* by Aly Ahmad Bakathir. Written in the wake of the defeat of the Arab armies in Palestine in 1948, the play reflects the intensification of the Islamic movement in the late '40s and, in particular, its attempt to develop a modern Islamic theory of social justice, in order to counter the increasing expansion of atheistic Marxism in the Arab World.²⁴⁶ In this play, at first Oedipus represents a kind of parodic Marxist who denounces religion and appropriates the goods of the temple to redistribute them to the people. Tiresias is a priest of Allah who, speaking in a literary style that suggests the Koran, urges people to submit to God. He is banished for his honesty by the new villain, a corrupt political leader and unprincipled high priest named Luskias. This character takes over, in a way, the role that Tiresias plays in Al-Hakim's work. Oedipus, in fact, is here a victim of Luskias's scheming. According to Tiresias' revelation, Luskias has created the prophecy of a murderous son and incestuous husband, and has manipulated the events by arranging them in a way that Oedipus would really be the murderous son and incestuous husband, thus becoming king. On the occasion of the confrontation with Luskias, this unprincipled high priest confesses all, but threatens to denounce Oedipus' murder to all the citizens, unless he banishes Tiresias and returns the goods he took from the temple. Oedipus courageously refuses to accept this compromise; he is denounced, but the timely arrival of the King of Corinth and two shepherds, who confirm Tiresias' story, saves him. Luskias is condemned to death, and the people of Thebes ask Oedipus to remain their king. Oedipus refuses the kingship; he is a pious Muslim who cares for the social justice for his people and wishes only to devote himself to Islamic studies. In the Dantean *Comedia's* style, the play ends with the redemption of its protagonist.

A similar end characterizes the other major Egyptian adaptation of Sophocles' play, i.e., *The Return of the Absent* by Fawai Fahmi. Written, like the earlier versions, in response to the political crisis of the Arab World, this play appears in

245 See Mahfouz (2012) 179–80. The Wafd Party was a nationalist liberal party in Egypt, organized in early 20th century; it was instrumental in achieving independence from Britain.

246 See Carlson (2004) 371–2; Etman (2004) 296; Mahfouz (2012) 180.

the aftermath of the defeat of Egypt in the 1967 war.²⁴⁷ After the defeat, the leader Gamal Abdur Nasser resigned, but he then took over again the nation's presidency in response to the people's demands. Fahmi's Oedipus is a honest man surrounded, as his earlier Arab versions, by corrupted people. At first, he tries to solve the nation's problems by hiding the corruption from the people. And once his personal, terrible truth is discovered, he uses any available means to save the nation, his wife, and himself from the catastrophe. First he swears, and has his mother-wife swear as well, that they would keep secret their former incestuous marriage and have no more intercourse; then to cut, once and for all, his relationship with his mother-wife, he marries a young girl. For this solution to work the author also has this Oedipus be impotent, so that there would not be children, i.e., no trace left of his incestuous marriage. Evidently this adaptation is concerned with shedding light on the noble qualities of the leader rather than with dealing with prophecy, incest, and parricide. Although at first Oedipus hides the truth from his people, ultimately he undertakes a political conversion: defying the fatalistic course of the traditional story, he exposes the corruption in the state instead of blinding himself (which the author relates to closing his eyes to the corruption of the court), and embarks on a corrective political action for the nation and for himself. Despite the sympathetic picture of Oedipus-Nasser, the play was criticized for being too hard in its critique of the government. Indeed, it was not allowed to be performed until 1977.

Two years after Fahmi's adaptation, in *The Comedy of Oedipus: You're the One Who Killed the Beast* (1970) by the Egyptian comic dramatist Ali Salim, Oedipus becomes a comic character.²⁴⁸ Salim's play is the first Arab version that sets the action outside Greece, precisely in the Egyptian Thebes, which helps the author make the references to local politics more direct and easy to understand. This play is a hilarious political satire that comically depicts the political situation in Egypt during the presidency of Nasser in 1967. Oedipus is a Pharaoh, not a Greek king, once again surrounded by a corrupt priesthood. This Egyptinized Oedipus represents the former Arab nationalist president, that is, Nasser, who was almost venerated by the Arab masses: he was looked up to as the leader who would save the Arab people from being subjugated by the West and the colonial powers. This Oedipus drastically differs from the traditional one, and the other Arab versions of him, in that he neither kills his father nor marries his mother. He is a commoner, a particularly clever one, as he is the town chess champion. Because of his cleverness he solves the riddle of the Sphinx, which is the only trait he shares with the traditional Oedipus;

²⁴⁷ See Carlson (2004) 372–3; Mahfouz (2012) 180–1.

²⁴⁸ On this play, see Carlson (2004) 372–4; for more details, see Mahfouz (2012) 181–7.

but, in contrast with his Greek archetype, this Oedipus is not able to definitely free the town from that beast. At first, the town responds to the beast's affliction by sending the most distinguished professors of the local university, all of whom are eaten. Vainly Tiresias suggests that the people face the beast as a group. With the people refusing this suggestion and Creon, the military leader, showing reluctance, the commoner but perspicacious Oedipus volunteers to go out and confront the beast, on the condition that he then be made king and allowed to marry the queen Jocasta. All consent except for Tiresias, who insists on urging the people to try to solve the nation's problem collectively rather than rely on some heroic leader. Oedipus goes and returns, apparently victorious; he is proclaimed king and creates inventions meant to improve the life of his people. His popularity grows tremendously, which irritates Thebes' chief of police, Awalih, the villain of this play. Differently from the other Arab versions, this villain is not a plotter, but rather an unscrupulous thug who uses torture and oppression to please, and get the favor of, whoever happens to come to power. Awalih cannot find a way to attack Oedipus until a beast appears outside the walls: some say it is a new one, other say it is the same as in the past, which was never really killed. Oedipus, this time, urges the people to follow Tiresias' suggestion, i.e., to face the beast as a group: they must become self-reliant rather than appeal to a hero who, inevitably, one day will die. The people listen to Oedipus, but the outcome is not the one that the audience might expect, whether they view the play as a comedy or as a political allegory. The people are in fact defeated by the beast, and Oedipus, Tiresias, and Creon are left to come to term with this catastrophe. Neither the civic leader, Oedipus, nor the military one, Creon, has prepared their people for the encounter with the beast. Oedipus is responsible for allowing Awalih, the master of repression, to continue to operate during his regime and thus to keep the people subjected to fear. This fear is what has 'frozen' Thebes' people. Defied, Oedipus leaves the palace to seek enlightenment, while Creon goes out to confront the beast to set an example, and he dies. The political message that the play conveys is a warning to the masses of the dangers of developing a cult personality for a leader and waiting for a savior to help them to face external colonial threats (= the beast). Oedipus' later exhortation to the people to face themselves the problems, to become self-reliant, as he—and a leader in general—cannot be with them forever, resonates, in a way, with the President Nasser's death the same year in which the play was published, i.e., 1970. Given this emphasis on the necessity for the people to act together against an external enemy, the fact that the fictional people's first unified action, as represented in the play, ends in defeat might be awkward, if not disturbing. Likely, it is the agony of the 1967

war which has inspired such a dark end;²⁴⁹ but the final ‘sacrifice’ of Creon sparks some light, the light of the hope of a brighter future as the people have learned to get rid of their fear of the enemy outside as well as of their subservience to a presumed savior within the walls.

Apparently Salim’s version of Oedipus’ story turns it into a vehicle with a political message, precisely, a kind of message that should have shaken his people by raising some awareness of their own share of the responsibility for their unstable socio-political situation created by the colonial, external power’s threats. Through this message, Salim’s Oedipus play should have fostered the people’s national feelings and prompted them to act together.

In a way, similar to this—and yet, with all the cultural, historical, and socio-political differences being taken into consideration—is the message implicit in another of the ‘60s and ‘70s adaptations of Sophocles’ play that appears in another non-western country: *The Gods Are Not To Blame* by the Nigerian Ola Rotimi.²⁵⁰ Written in 1967 upon a request from the director of the Institute of African Studies of the Obafemi Awolowo University Ife-Ife (Nigeria), this three-acts play with a prologue premiered a year later, in 1968, at the height of the Nigeria’s civil war, known as the Biafran War. During this war, which lasted from 1967 to early 1970, there was a failed attempt to divide the federation, which the colonial government left behind, into separate states. It soon became a matter of intertribal warfare, as British Nigeria had grouped people for governance without any respect for their ethnic, and thus religious and cultural, differences. “The root cause of that war,”—as Rotimi commented—“was tribal distrust which is what I’ve worked into the play as the basic flaw of the hero, Odewale.”²⁵¹ By turning the question of Oedipus’ biological identity into a question of tribal identity, and placing the drama in a post-colonial context,²⁵² in which the struggle to build an identity in the wake of the colonial past is a constant, Rotimi intended to make that ancient story relevant to the socio-political matrix of contemporary Africa: “Nigeria,” she stated in an interview pertaining to her choice of Sophocles’ tragedy, “was in the throes of a civil war flared by ethnic distrust, the bane of all Africa. A shattering tragedy like

249 This is in particular the opinion of Carlson (2004) 374.

250 On this adaptation, see Wetmore (2001) 103–20; Macintosh (2009) 168–71; Caneva (2013). For a concise overview of its publication and production history, see Caneva (2013).

251 Rotimi (1971) 149 n.16.

252 For a discussion of adaptations of Sophocles’ Oedipus in a post-colonial context, see, in general, Harwick (2004).

Oedipus' calamity should bring out the warning against this cancerous foible, I thought . . . in all its ironic gruesomeness. So, the decision on *Oedipus Rex*."²⁵³ Through the tragic-ironic story of Odewale-Oedipus, Rotimi intended to show not only how tribal allegiances were ruining the country, but also how those allegiances might be illusory, as there must exist among individuals in Africa far deeper ties than the tribal ones, ties that its citizens can ignore only at their own risks. This is what happens to Odewale: born to the king Adetusa (= Laius) and the queen Ojuola (= Jocasta), he is first abandoned to death because of the well-known prophecy of parricide and incest. At the beginning of the play, in a way that parallels the plotline of Sophocles' play, Odewale happens to be the foreign king of Kutuje (= Thebes); he has received the throne from the people, and the queen Ojuola in marriage, as a reward for having helped them defeat their tribal enemy (a replacement for the Sphinx). Years later, a mysterious sickness devastates Kutuje, and to free the town the killer of the former king, Adetusa, must be found. Odewale starts the search that, like in Sophocles, will just lead him to discover his real identity, his real *tribal* identity, with all the truths which that discovery will involve. He in fact turns out to be the killer of Adetusa, his own father (and therefore the husband of his own mother), which happened not because of Destiny, like in Sophocles; it happened because of tribal distrust and hate. The parricide was in fact unwittingly committed over a tribal quarrel about land, a quarrel thus fuelled by tribal hostilities.

"[...] Do not blame the Gods,"—Odewale says upon the discovery—"Let no one blame the powers. My people, learn from my fall. The powers would have failed if I did not let them use me. They knew my weakness: the weakness of a man easily moved to the defence of his tribe against others. I once slew a man [...]. I could have spared him. But he spat on my tribe. He spat on the tribe I thought was my own tribe. The man laughed [...] And I lost my reason. Now I find out that that very man was my . . . own father [...]"²⁵⁴

Unequivocally, these words convey the main message: the play condemns the overemphasis upon tribal origins and denounces the fallacy both of tribal identity and of a socio-political system that grants to tribal identity such an importance that it puts at risk the survival of the entire society itself. Odewale discovers that he does not belong to the tribe with which he identified so strongly that he has even killed in its defence, only to then find out not simply that his victim

253 Adelugba (2002).

254 Rotimi (1971) 71.

was his father, but that he himself belonged to the tribe he thought was his enemy. His becomes a social *hamartia*. People, as he says, must learn from his fall; they must take on their responsibility for the inner conflict that is destroying their nation, rather than blaming each other tribe's enemy and their western allies, i.e., the imperial, neo-colonial 'gods' on the international stage.

Almost in the same decades of the 20th century as the ones under discussion, i.e., between the '60s and '70s, despite the 'crisis' which Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* undergoes in the Western world, rewritings of Sophocles' play with a distinct political nuance, aiming either at a delayed or at a current reaction to specific historical, and socio-political events, surface in Europe and the U.S. as well. Dictatorship, totalitarianism, the atrocities of the related wars, and the 'wounds' they left behind—even, and still, those of Nazi Germany—are a leitmotif of those rewritings. In this specific light mention should be made of three highly interesting, yet mostly disregarded adaptations, namely *Il Dio Kurt. Tragedia in un Prologo e due Atti* (*God Kurt. A Two-Acts Tragedy with a Prologue*),²⁵⁵ by the Italian intellectual and eclectic writer Alberto Moravia (1907–1990), *Oedipus Pig* (or *Oedipig*), and *King Hogdacus the First* (or *In Hog We Trust*), by the Greek poet and political activist Nanos Valaoritis, written during the years of the dictatorship of the Colonels in Greece (i.e., the Greek Junta, 1967–1974).²⁵⁶

Moravia's play, published in 1968 and first performed in 1969,²⁵⁷ offers a subtle re-elaboration of Sophocles' tragedy in terms of denunciation of the terrible truth of the Nazi legacy and the horrors of the Holocaust. The story is set in an anonymous concentration camp in Poland, which clearly resembled Auschwitz and where—as in all camps—the Germans 'promoted' the death of human values and rights, by replacing them with their atrocious norms that arbitrarily would decide the life and death of the Jews. Against this background Moravia re-elaborated the tragedy of Oedipus by presenting it as a Nazi 'cultural experiment', thus implying a polemical allusion to the atrocious human experiments of the German physicians (e.g., J. R. Mengele,

255 All the references to, and quotations of, Moravia's *Il Dio Kurt*, both in the text and in the footnotes, are from the latest edition of his theatrical production by Nari-Vazzoler (1998). For a detailed analysis, see Lauriola (forthcoming).

256 Valaoritis' two plays mentioned above were written specifically in 1969 while the poet was self-exiled in the United States, teaching creative writing at the University of San Francisco. The plays have so far been unpublished and unperformed—and I would add 'unstudied'. To my knowledge the only scholarly study devoted to these works of Valaoritis is by Rapti (2014), on which my discussion is heavily drawn.

257 Useful information about the performance and the reaction of both the critics and the audience is in Rivieri (2013) 131–3.

C. Clauberg, etc.) who played a major role within Hitler's racial hygiene. The 'cultural experiment' is contrived by the camp's SS commander Kurt—the main character of Moravia's play—who stages 'his own' version of Sophocles' play. Using the metatheatrical technique, Moravia turned Oedipus' tragedy into a 'play within a play': the tragedy is re-enacted and unraveled (a feature that it truly shares with the original) within the (main) play, the one 'directed', and also performed, by Kurt. The metatheatrical device becomes Moravia's vehicle for his socio-political discourse of denouncement.²⁵⁸ The ultimate aim of Kurt's experiment is indeed not much different from the infamous 'scientific' ones. It is, in fact, meant to guarantee the supremacy of the pure Aryan race, and thus the advent of 'The New Order' and of the 'Superior Type of Humanity', both theorized by Hitler.²⁵⁹ The way to success in this experiment is the same as the one followed in the scientific experiments, i.e., through the annihilation of the Jews. While the scientific experiments contributed to a physical extermination, the cultural one, proposed in Moravia's play, is meant to 'exterminate' the essential tenets of the Jewish culture, which are considered as responsible for the corruption of the master race's culture. With the family being the center of Jewish culture and morality, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the *par excellence* tragedy of the laceration of the family, proves to be a perfect choice for the experiment. When Kurt provides an explanation for the choice of this tragedy, which he has decided to stage during the Christmas season of the year 1944 in front of an audience of SS officers, the destructive mechanisms that would nullify the notion of family itself, i.e., parricide and incest, are indeed much emphasized (*Il Dio Kurt*, pp. 446–7). Moreover, the choice is significantly linked to the Nazi theory of race: it is in fact pointed out that Oedipus' family belongs to a world, i.e., Antiquity, that has already been corrupted, a world of which the Jews were a part, while the Aryans were not, as they were 'the original', the pure and limpid prototype (*Il Dio Kurt*, pp. 449–50). As a Nazi commander and promoter of the experiment, Kurt strenuously champions the Nazi ideology of race by 'playing God', i.e., taking on the role of a superior being with the power to decide over humans' life and death.²⁶⁰ God in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Fate/Destiny in the Greek-pagan one. Kurt subtly sets the action (i.e., the experiment) in motion, directing and manipulating, as puppets, those

258 For a further analysis of this dramatic feature, too, see Lauriola (forthcoming).

259 See, e.g., A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (1925), ch. XI ("Race and People"—English translation by Murphy [1939] available at <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0200601.txt>).

260 This 'playing god' might mirror the propagandistic, deified portrayal of Hitler, which was very common: see, e.g., Goldfarb (1979).

who play the characters of the Sophoclean tragedy that he is about to put on stage. These persons, Jewish prisoners, are unwitting participants in the experiment, or, more precisely, in the kind of experiment in which they will be involved.²⁶¹ More importantly, their lack of awareness pertains to their family ties—a trait of paramount significance in the original Greek model.²⁶² The cast that Kurt accurately puts together is in fact constituted by a Jewish family: a son (Saul), a mother (Myriam), and a father. They will re-enact Oedipus' tragic story, with Kurt-director's cuts that are necessary for fulfilling the experiment. The experiment consists of inducing an unsuspecting son to kill his father and sleep with his mother, thus contravening the norms of the family. These events, like in Sophocles, have already happened; they will be gradually unraveled and revealed through a long inquiry promoted by Kurt himself. Kurt's inquiry—which occurs throughout the drama—recalls, indeed, the one that Sophocles' Oedipus carried out in his gradual process of discovering the terrible truth. In Moravia's play, too, true to the basics of Oedipus' tragedy, Saul-Oedipus must discover the truth by undergoing a gradual, painful revelation. But, differently from Sophocles' Oedipus, he is not the investigator who becomes the investigated. Since the beginning, he is a passive recipient of the agency of Fate, i.e., the Nazi Fate of races, with the power, which it claims, to decide over the destiny of humankind. This Fate is what Kurt, the 'god' Kurt, indeed embodies.

A similar combination of socio-political denouncement and literary/theatrical experiment characterizing Moravia's work is to be found in the 'piggish' Oedipus plays of the Greek poet Nanos Valaoritis as well. Indeed, a denouncement of Nazi ideology and, more particularly, of the extreme rightist party resulting in the dictatorship of the Colonels (and related atrocities), along with a literary/linguistic experiment, characterizes Valaoritis' *Oedipus Pig* (or *Oedipig*) and *King Hogdacus the First* (or *In Hog We Trust*).²⁶³ Both plays

261 As a matter of fact, at least two of them, i.e., Saul (the counterpart of Oedipus) and Myriam (the counterpart of Jocasta), were informed that they would participate in an experiment, but (and obviously) they did not know which kind of experiment was awaiting them. They would just expect to be cruelly used in one of the 'usual' scientific experiments (see, in fact, *Il Dio Kurt*, p. 486).

262 It must be noted that Myriam-Jocasta was actually aware of the identity of the man with whom she would be forced to have intercourse. She was forced to such an action with the threat they would kill her son, should she rebel or not follow *ad litteram* all the commands.

263 To them one should add *Oedipus Reversed* or *the Dilemma of a Man of Unknown Identity*: see Rapti (2014) 164–6.

are satires of the regime of the generals in Greece from 1967 to 1974; at the same time they convey the poet's critique and denunciation of any kind of authoritarian form, whether it occurs in society or in literature, precisely in the canonical works of Western tradition. This denunciation takes the form of the poet's ludic experiment with the English language. Championing freedom both from a political, oppressive regime and from a preordained state of language and preconceived ideas, Valaoritis created a completely new language, one that could demythologize the traditionally inherited and socially accepted language; in this way, at the same time, he expressed his abhorrence of any fascist ideology rooted in dangerous discursive practices like those used by Nazis. Borrowing George Orwell's idea of animal hierarchy as an allegory and a satire of the Stalinist era (*Animal Farm*, 1945), to satirize the Greek military Junta and its supporters Valaoritis brought about a new language out of a lexicon gravitating around the pig as a dramatic character. Given the derogatory name 'pigs' used in major American cities from the late '60s on, mostly to jeer at the police, the pig as a character and source of a new lexicon seemed to Valaoritis ideal for his plays. Besides the derogatory connotation of pig in terms of figure and word, Valaoritis intended "[...] to create a language in its lower possible level, to downgrade a myth and a hero to a grotesque figure, something that fitted perfectly the Junta: the pigs were the Colonels and their supporters."²⁶⁴ Valaoritis' Oedipus-plays thus contain a language referring to pigs, hog, swine, piglet, etc., starting from the titles themselves; his is a language created through varied mechanisms such as inversion, displacement, reversal, substitution, puns, and wordplay. Pun and wordplay are the grounding of the title *Oedipus Pig*, which echoes, and denigrates, Sophocles' *Oedipus [the] King*; while a subversion of the name Labdacus (Oedipus' grandfather) is evident in *Hogdacus*, which also, and more importantly, polemically alludes to 'Holocaust'. It is for this allusion, and the political aims behind it, that the poet foregrounded the name *Hogdacus* (at the expense of the name *Oedipus*) in the title of one of the two Oedipus-plays, in order for him to criticize anti-semitism.²⁶⁵ In sum, Valaoritis' 'weapon' of denunciation and fighting against oppressive authority and the atrocities of fascist regimes is a 'bestial' language that can be readily understood by everyone without any need of further explanation and/or a dictionary. It is a language that speaks of, and is fitting to, his lowest targets, the Colonels and their followers; and—in a more personal perspective—it is the language which helps Valaoritis to cope with humor with the horrible

²⁶⁴ Rapti (2014) 167.

²⁶⁵ For a detailed description of the plot, see Rapti (2014) 170–4.

and traumatic realities that he himself experienced. The *par excellence* model of the tragic is turned, once again, in grotesque comedy, which validates the long-standing impact of Sophocles' Oedipus in reception history, despite the wide emergence of other tragedies that have been seen as more suitable for the modern 'taste'.

A politically parodic overtone that can be detected starting from the title, a wordplay itself like those of Valaoritis's plays, characterizes *Oedipus Nix* by the American writer and director Robert Brustein (1974).²⁶⁶ It parodies, and yet denounces, the truth of the Watergate scandal with the president Nixon being an Oedipus who actually does not want the truth to be discovered: Creon—to whom, in this play, Oedipus has assigned the task to search for the criminals—is in fact forced to resign, once he is back and reveals the truth to 'Oedipus Nix'!

Still in the mid '70s, a satiric and parodic vein, almost turning into the grotesque, informs another rewriting of Sophocles' play: *Das Sterben des Pythia* ("The Death of the Pythia") by the Swiss Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921–1990), one of the leading playwrights of the German-language theater, for decades after the Second World War.²⁶⁷ Published in 1976 in the collection *Der Mitmacher* ("The Collaborator"), *Das Sterben des Pythia* is a peculiar re-elaboration of the Greek tragedy not only in terms of content and meanings, but also in terms of literary form, which scholars seem not to find easy to define. It is certainly not a play, but rather a short story, a parodistic story, a kind of *divertissement*,²⁶⁸ and a "strange mixture of an essay and a narrative work."²⁶⁹ The articulation of this story is also *sui generis*: there is not a well-defined division in chapters or sections, and there are mere paragraph breaks that mark temporal discontinuities in the course of the events. It starts *in medias res* with one of the main characters, i.e., the Pythia, who is here named Pannachis XI, with the other main personage being—as it will be seen—not even Oedipus, but Tiresias. Oracles and prophecies are the main themes that the author parodistically, and with some dark humor, scrutinizes, as he seems to have planned to experiment

266 See Foley (2012) 170.

267 The German title is sometimes translated as "The Dying Pythia," which, perhaps, is closer to the narrative context, as the Pythia is portrayed in her last years waiting to die. Quotations and page number are from Dürrenmatt (2006). About this work, see Spycher (1981); Gentili/Pretagostini (1986) 294–6; Paduano (2008) 175–7; Treu (2012) 228–30; Pezzini (2015).

268 Paduano, for instance, labels it *uno scherzo scintillante e irriverente* ("a brilliant and irreverent joke," 2008: 175).

269 Treu (2012) 230.

with replacing such an important component of the traditional story, i.e., Destiny, with Chance/Coincidence/Accident (= *Zufall*). Indeed, the two main characters, the priestess of Apollo, Pannachis XI, and the seer Tiresias, themselves do not believe in gods, in their ability to inspire oracles, and thus in their control of human life. They themselves do not believe in their pronouncements: while the Pythia delivers oracles out of her imagination—and they become more and more extravagant as she grows old and annoyed—the seer Tiresias asks her to pronounce his own prophecies, which are the product of a rational calculation. They in fact are devised by the seer with the intention both to interfere in the political sphere (true to the accusation of the traditional Oedipus) and to accordingly shape the course of human events.²⁷⁰ By ‘chance’, i.e., in an entirely casual fashion, everything happens exactly as in the traditional story, and by the same ‘chance’, perhaps ironically, the calculated-made-up prophecies of Tiresias produce outcomes opposite to his expectations. The story begins inside the temple of Delphi with Pannachis XI performing her duties without any enthusiasm, actually “disgruntled by her own oracular mischief and the guillibility of the Greek” (*The Death of the Pythia*, p. 279). Oedipus finds her ‘in a bad mood’, and in response to his request “she made as absurd and improbable a prediction as possible, one that she was certain would never come to pass,” because, she thought, no one “would be capable of murdering his own father and sleeping with his own mother” (*The Death of the Pythia*, p. 279). That of the Pythia is a chance oracle, given just to mock at Oedipus. Indeed, when a year later the blind Oedipus returns to her to announce that her oracle became true, her first reaction is to laugh loudly. Against her belief and expectation she had inadvertently set in motion a chain-reaction of events that unpredictably made her oracle come true. After the blind Oedipus’ visit to the very elderly Pythia, the ghosts of the other characters involved in Oedipus’ story appear before the priestess to tell, each of them, the piece of the story that concerns them, and each in one’s own perspective. They are the shadows of Menoeceus (father of Creon and Jocasta), Laius, Oedipus himself, Jocasta, and even the Sphinx. The stories seem to multiply as well as the person of Oedipus himself to the point that they spark doubt about the ‘genuine’ Oedipus. And while the versions vary, all of them incredibly (!) back the Pythia’s chance oracle up. According to Jocasta’s version, Oedipus is not Laius’ son—as Laius himself believes; Jocasta had her child from the commanding officer of the royal guard—who was however killed by Oedipus once he caught him in his mother’s bed. According to the Sphinx’s version, Oedipus is actually her own and Polyphontes’ son. The Sphinx was the daughter that Laius begat with Hippodameia upon his rape. Polyphontes was Laius’ charioteer. Castrated

270 See, e.g., Paduano (2008) 175–6.

by Hippodameia's husband in revenge, to assure himself a descendant Laius ordered Polyphontes to rape the Sphinx. The chance oracle of the Pythia still 'stands', as Oedipus killed Laius' charioteer, too, at the well-known crossroad, and then became the Sphinx's lover (instead of killing her). The Sphinx insists that her own son is the genuine Oedipus, as she managed to save him when Laius, reached by the well-known prophecy, ordered her to kill both her own son (grandchild to Laius) and the son that Laius thought he had with Jocasta.²⁷¹ The prophecy given to Laius is one of the two involving the 'calculating' prophecies of Tiresias: it is a paid-oracle conceived by Tiresias for a political purpose, thus using, in a rational way (i.e., for making profit!) the irrational faith in the gods. Tiresias says he is a "democrat", and through his calculated prophecies he wishes to avoid the establishment of a tyrannical, totalitarian government. The prophecy given to Laius was an intimidating one, in turn commissioned by Menoeceus to prevent Laius from begetting any descendant so that he might hand the throne over to Creon. This prophecy is thus the result of political corruption. The other prophecy formulated by Tiresias corresponds to Apollo's response to the Sophoclean Oedipus' query about how to end the plague: to find and punish Laius' murderer is the remedy, which sets in motion—as is well-known—the investigation of the case. Tiresias' intention was to focus the people's attention on Creon as the suspected murderer, to prevent him from overthrowing Oedipus and replacing him as king of Thebes. Tiresias mistakenly believed that Laius' murder was a political one and was realized by Creon; he thus made a bad calculation, and that same 'chance' that made Pannachis' oracle true brought about the opposite effect of Tiresias' prophecy.

What of Oedipus in all this dizzy whirl of 'casual' events and alternative stories with alternative outcomes? While in the version of the Sphinx's story Oedipus is an innocent victim of chance, as he did not know that Polyphontes, Laius' charioteer, was his father, in the version of Oedipus' ghost, he represents "a kind of triumphantly exploding Oedipus complex".²⁷²

When I left you that day, I thought to myself: if Polybos and Meropë were not my parents, then according to the oracle, my parents would be those who would suffer the fate you predicted. And when at a crossroads I killed a hot-tempered, vain old man, whom else could I have killed but my father?

(*The Death of the Pythia*, pp. 288–9)

²⁷¹ "Perhaps there is a third Oedipus," Tiresias in fact says to Pannychis: Dürrenmatt (2006) 272.

²⁷² Spycher (1981) 616.

With these words the shade of Oedipus appears before the Pythia, thus admitting he knew from the start he was not the son of Polybus and Merope. He did not make any effort to neutralize the oracle; on the contrary, he used it to find out the truth, to discover his real parents and, above all, to take that atrocious revenge over those who, in the end, were so prompt to eliminate him.

And what of the truth? That is, who is telling the truth with the impression being that all are lying, making up their own version of the story, to their own interests? That of Dürrenmatt pertaining to such an important issue in the original tragedy as truth is an open-ending answer: "Truth is truth only to the extent that we leave it in peace" (*The Death of the Pythia*, p. 302).²⁷³

A rebellious and revengeful Oedipus is at the heart of another of the '70s-adaptations of Sophocles' tragedy: *Edipus* ("Oedipus") by the Italian eclectic writer, art historian, and literary critic Giovanni Testori (1923–1993).²⁷⁴ Published in 1977, and performed in the same year at the *Salone Pier Lombardo* ("Pier Lombardo Hall") in Milan,²⁷⁵ Testori's *Edipus* constitutes the last *pièce* of a trilogy that the author started composing in 1972 and that includes a re-elaboration of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (*Amleto*, 1972) and *Macbeth* (*Macbetto*, 1974): *La Trilogia degli Scarrozzanti* ("The Trilogy of the Itinerants").

The title's word *Scarrozzanti* ("Itinerants") refers to a kind of acting company in vogue in the '30s, in particular in Northern Italy, which, travelling from place to place, performed extemporaneous *pièces* in the countrysides and/or in the villages' central squares. Their improvised works usually involved their personal experiences and social claims, which resulted in overlapping the fictional life, i.e., the one of the character interpreted by the actor, and the real one, i.e., the actor's life.²⁷⁶ Theirs is the world *dei reietti, dei diversi, dei fuori norma, dei non accettati dai partiti e dalle chiese* ("of the Rejected, the Unalike, the Nonstandard, the Spurned both by any political party and by any religion"); and for them life is just *fatale solitudine, autodistruzione, girare . . .* ("fatal loneliness, self-destruction, roaming . . .").²⁷⁷ Shaped in the form of a monologue

273 On this open conclusion, see Pezzini (2015) 86.

274 On Testori's *Edipus*, see, in general, Taffon (1997); Giuliani (2008); Paduano (2008) 178–80; Beltrametti (2013) 240–56.

275 For concise information about the première and theatrical productions, see Giuliani (2008) 373 with nn. 1; 3.

276 Beltrametti (2013), in particular, analyzed Testori's work in light of this feature. See, also, Giuliani (2008) esp. 376–7.

277 All page numbers and quotations are from Testori (1997). The quotations I cited above in the text are from p. 1532.

recited by only one *Scarrozzante* ("Itinerant Actor"),²⁷⁸ and written in an experimental language consisting of a mix of Lombard dialect, English, French, and even Latin, *Edipus* targets the author's contemporary political and social order, which was felt as being repressive and totalitarian. Laius is the one who represents the repressive despotism of the fathers' generation, i.e., of the old-fashioned and bigotted generation, which would not tolerate 'diversity', such as homosexuality.²⁷⁹ To this generation Oedipus, representative of the new generation, opposes his transgression, consciously performing his 'crimes'. He is an anarchist, a freedom fighter whose god is not Apollo but, significantly, Dionysus, the well known *different* and, in a way, revolutionary/subversive god within the Greek pantheon. The socio-political revolution that Testori's Oedipus champions takes the form of a generational conflict between father and son,²⁸⁰ and the rebellion results in a specific outcome that should avenge both Laius' attempted filicide and his repressive totalitarianism. Testori's Oedipus sodomizes and castrates Laius; therefore, his murder is just an 'appendix'. In this light, the incest—a conscious incest—is primarily another form of the filial aggressiveness and hostility, as it was meant to give his father's authority the final smack.²⁸¹ But, although realized with revengeful and rebellious intentions, the experience of the incest has a positive, joyful impact on Oedipus as well as on Jocasta, for whom, too, it becomes a way to take revenge over the despotic and repressive Laius. Jocasta in fact counteracts the doubts whether she should commit suicide, to expiate what is a fault before the law of her husband's despotic state, with an exuberant enthusiasm for a new life together with Oedipus. The unexpected harmony and happiness that the two find in their new love is soon curbed and destroyed by a violent series of gunshots that killed the mother-wife and the son-husband. This *finale* seals the end of Testori's *Edipus*, but does not seal the end of the attempted revolution and revolutionary ideas which Testori's Oedipus is meant to convey: this Oedipus has paved a new path toward a new and better world, a world of freedom and tolerance, which others, following his footsteps, can contribute to building.

278 By changing dress, he plays all the main roles, respectively first Laius, then Jocasta (with frequent and quick shift of dress between the two, to simulate a dialogue), and finally Oedipus.

279 On the contemporary historical and socio-cultural climate, see, e.g., Giuliani (2008) 376–8 with nn. 5–7 (n. 5 details Testori's personal struggle to deal with his homosexuality in the '70s-Italy); Beltrametti (2008) esp. 252–4.

280 See, e.g., Giuliani (2008) 382 n. 7; Paduano (2008) 178.

281 Giuliani (2008) 378 with n. 10.

Acceptance and *quasi*-celebration of the repressed and taboos, precisely the incest; exuberant and experimental language, with a preference for vernacular—all are among the basic traits that the 1980-rewriting of Sophocles' play by the British dramatist and actor Steven Berkoff shares, in a way, with Testori's work. Berkoff's controversial and almost shocking play is entitled *Greek*, and it premiered in London in February 1980.²⁸² Set in the modern London suburbs, it stages the story of Eddy, the 'new' Oedipus, a restaurateur who, when an infant, was accidentally separated from his biological parents. During a cruise on the Thames the boat sunk and the baby was believed to be dead; he actually survived and was adopted by another couple, which kept secret his origin. When the (adoptive) father told him that a fortune-teller (the modern oracle) had prophesied a violent death for Eddy's father and intercourse with his mother, Eddy resolved to leave home. That was actually a pretext for him to run away from a corrupt and unhealthy environment that would even justify Nazism. Eddy came to wander through London, which was ridden by a plague, a modernized plague consisting of the contemporary controversial socio-political issues, such as the spreading of pornography, racism, police brutality, mass unemployment, etc., all mirroring the discontent in England in the '80s. One day he happened to engage in a dispute with the owner of a café who was indeed his biological father. Like Sophocles' Oedipus, Eddy killed him unknowingly; his is an "onomatopoeic parricide",²⁸³ a verbal fighting that caused his father's death: "You killed him/I never realized words can killed," as the waitress, wife of the owner and thus mother of Eddy, commented.²⁸⁴ Soon after, Eddy courted that waitress-widow and married her. Without knowing it, Eddy fulfilled the fortune-teller's prophecy. Differently from Sophocles, the marriage with the 'new Jocasta' is not a consequence of the victory over the Sphinx. The encounter with the latter—a modern, feminist Sphinx—is delayed; it occurred after ten years of marriage. The feast celebrating Eddy's victory became the occasion for the discovery of the terrible truth. Among the guests at this feast were the adoptive parents of Eddy: as they and Eddy's mother-wife compare their stories of the shipwreck, the terrible truth inevitably surfaced. At first, Eddy thought of hurting his eyes, 'Greek style'; then, he resolved to accept what he had done, not to give up to the happy life he found with his wife, who turned out to be his mother: "It's love, I feel it's love,

282 It later inspired the post-modern opera, with the same title, by the British composer Mark-Anthony Turnage in 1992 (on this operatic version, see Ewans [2007] esp. 186–199). In general, on Berkoff's *Greek*, see Paduano (2008) 180–2; Macintosh (2009) 173–81; Citti/Iannucci (2012) XLIX–LI; Sheehan (2012) 139–41.

283 Macintosh (2009) 178.

284 Page numbers and quotations are from Berkoff (1994). The line cited above is from p. 117.

what matters what form it takes”,²⁸⁵ Eddy ultimately claimed as he considered that sexual transgression harmless and certainly preferable to the universal violence and destruction that politics and war have been causing in the world. At the same time, he satirically targeted the society’s common phobia of novelty and innovation: how to know whether a child born from a mother and her own son is something bad, if you have ever seen one of such a kind?²⁸⁶ While Eddy’s claims certainly show the author’s intention to deliver, through the revised myth, a powerful social and political commentary, the ‘happy ending’, sealed by Eddy’s triumphant rhapsody of love for his mother-wife, gives *Greek* a satiric/comedic overtone which situates the play within the Oedipal parodic tradition that—as it has been seen—especially 20th-century rewritings of Sophocles’ tragedy have contributed to creating.

By the end of the 20th century and, far more evidently, in the 21st century, a shift of interest to lesser-known plays of Sophocles is to be noted as both authors and the public seem to have had enough of *Oedipus the King* in the wake of the popularization of Freudian psychoanalysis.²⁸⁷ Nonetheless this specific play of Sophocles has continued to be a source of inspiration for artistic products, literature included, in at least two forms: precisely, in the form of ‘motifs’—which I would label as ‘Oedipal motifs’—and, perhaps more importantly, in the form of ‘feminist’ responses, with Jocasta and *her* experience as mother/wife taking center stage.²⁸⁸ Parricide is relegated to a secondary consideration and the conflict father-son, with its political overtone as well, no longer inevitably holds the spotlight. A usually ‘silenced’ Jocasta is given a voice: it is her perspective which burrows through the story and asserts itself, often with the shocking acceptance of the incest taboo whose infraction not only occurs consciously, but might be even used to claim a woman’s right to a ‘recovered’ happiness, to freedom from patriarchal conventions, and, in

285 Berkoff (1994) 139.

286 Paduano (2008) 182.

287 As Macintosh (2014) 11: 1138 observes, interest has shifted in particular to Sophoclean plays dealing with the characters’ war experience, which now, in the light of modern psychiatry, is designated as PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress disorder). Such is the case, for instance, of Sophocles’ *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*: see above, e.g., 60; 63–4; 133–7. This is a trend that has bloomed in the U.S. in particular, upon the pioneering works of the American psychiatrist Jonathan Shay (1994; 2002), followed by the translator and director Doerries (2008; 2015) and the clinical professor of Classics Meineck (2010; 2012). For an overview on this new interest and subsequent type of adaptation of Greek Tragedy, and Classics in general, see Lauriola (2014a; 2014b).

288 For the ‘Oedipal motifs’ see below, 240–6. As for Jocasta’s ‘moving’ in a leading role, in addition to the literary works discussed above, see below, e.g., 264–5; 270–1.

consequence, to power. Of such kind is the Jocasta of the novel *Power dreamers. The Jocasta Complex* by the French-American novelist and dramatist Ursule Molinaro (1916–2000).²⁸⁹ Published in 1994, and consisting of twenty-eight chapters, with an Epilogue, it refers to the story of Oedipus, whose framework is more or less left intact, from Jocasta's point of view. She starts her story from the time of her marriage with Laius, a time that no Greek drama has put on stage, portraying herself as an insecure, unconfident woman. Laius in fact soon began courting Crysippus,²⁹⁰ which Jocasta interprets as a sign that her husband has no more interest in her, perhaps—as a 'typical' woman would think—because she is no longer attractive. She complains that Laius has so far wanted to avoid having a child since, with the two of them being remotely related, he fears that the child would be defective, "perhaps feeble-minded" (*The Jocasta Complex*, p. 9).²⁹¹ Although insecure, this Jocasta does not lack wit, as her sarcastic comment reveals: "I think *he* is becoming feeble-minded, in the adulation of his wide-eyed golden boy", i.e., Crysippus (*The Jocasta Complex*, p. 9). Indeed, Molinaro's Jocasta is a self-aware woman who manages to use her intelligence not only to make it certain she will be pregnant with Laius' child, but also—and more importantly—to embrace and, at the same time, challenge her fate, once it will inexorably present itself. Jocasta gives birth to a child, Oedipus, but cannot enjoy her baby, as the well-known, 'preventive' Delphic oracle is delivered, conveniently, *post eventum*. Jocasta's reaction speaks much of her maternal love as she inveighs against Apollo's priestess:

What kind of being are these wizened virgins Apollo appoints to sit astride tripods, & predict human misery from the mist of sulphur fumes? Do they envy motherhood [...]? Do they hate children? [...] I feel like confronting her myself. Not in consultation. I want her to see my empty arms, from which a bright new life was torn, & handed to a messenger of death, because of her drug-induced mutterings. To be murdered, instead of growing up to be a murderer. A parricide.

(*The Jocasta Complex*, p. 13)

289 On this novel, see, in particular, Scorrano/Ventricelli (2013) 99–110.

290 Differently from the well-known ancient version, in Molinaro's rewriting, Laius seems to have brought Chrysippus to Thebes to live peacefully with him in his palace, thus neglecting Jocasta.

291 Hereafter I shall use the novel's short title *The Jocasta Complex*. Page numbers and quotations are from Molinaro (1994).

It is the pain of a mother, forcibly deprived of her newly born child, which prevails in this *tirade*, a mother who would do whatever it takes to save and keep her child, even to challenge Apollo: she in fact declares that, had the oracle threatened her own life rather than her husband's, she would however have chosen to keep the baby. These are thoughts that clearly mirror the skepticism of Sophocles' Jocasta; but, differently from Sophocles' and the traditional, submissive woman, Molinaro's Jocasta reacts to the abuse by taking the decision to no longer sleep with Laius, thus growing in resentment toward him. Time passes, almost eighteen years, when the news of Laius' death in an accident reaches Thebes.²⁹² Jocasta's resentment does not decrease; she consults Tiresias to know for sure how Laius died, whether by an accident or murder. In front of the traditionally obscure/enigmatic answer of Tiresias ("Murder *was* an accident," *The Jocasta Complex*, p. 25), the queen insists upon asking for details, almost sensing that the oracle is indeed coming true. She in fact asks Tiresias whether she should expect to see her son again. Her perception that the oracle has proven to be true gives her joy rather than make her afraid of the consequences. From that moment on, Jocasta admits she is now waiting for the young husband, i.e., her son. Creon's edict to give her sister's hand to the one who would defeat the Sphinx does not undermine her confidence. With a shocking awareness, she in fact declares: "Who [*sc.*, would vanquish the Sphinx] but the young parricide with the intelligent eyes: if I believe the oracle. & I do. I really do" (*The Jocasta Complex*, p. 27). This Jocasta is consciously waiting for her son-new husband: she is waiting for him as a mother and as a wife. For her the oracle was not a scary warning, given that it was *post eventum*. It was rather a source for 'disabling' her femininity and maternity, a disablement to which this Jocasta has never surrendered. Indeed, when she is about to marry the stranger who freed them from the Sphinx, and contemplates the possibility of bearing a new child, she says, "I am an intelligent woman. & I intend to use my intelligence not only to embrace my fate with my eyes wide open, but to seduce it" (*The Jocasta Complex*, p. 31). She wants to have a second chance as a woman, thinking of the 'forthcoming' new marriage as the one that would compensate for the first, unhappy one. She dismisses the incest taboo with her 'progressive' challenge both to the hypocritical, societal conventions and to the destiny that has found a way to warn her and, yet, to make the prophecy become true.

With the arrival of Oedipus in Thebes, Jocasta's first-person narrative is interrupted to give space to Oedipus' voice, though indirectly, i.e., through a couple of letters he is writing, one addressed to his supposed parents in Corinth, and

292 "...the King had been dragged to his death by the suddenly shying horses of his own chariot" (*The Jocasta Complex*, p. 24) is the news that Jocasta receives about Laius' death.

the other to a man called Walrus, who replaces Sophocles' anonymous youth who prompted Oedipus' travel to Delphi with his insinuation that Oedipus was not the true son of Polybus and Merope.²⁹³ After telling him of his murder of a man on a chariot, and of his defeat of the Sphinx, ironically Oedipus thanks Walrus since, because of his insinuation and subsequent travel to Delphi, he has 'saved' Oedipus from the risk of committing parricide and incest (!). As the narrative proceeds, Jocasta regains her voice and again becomes the narrator.

Despite her 'progressive/feministic' attitude toward the taboos, Jocasta does, however, have some hesitations, fully displaying her human perplexity, when, after the marriage, the moment to be with Oedipus comes: "Despite my sincere contempt for man-made taboos & religious scare tactics, something dark inside me balks at the prospect of letting Oedipus reenter whence he came forth into the world" (*The Jocasta Complex*, p. 51). She is even tempted to tell the truth to Oedipus, but does not yield to that temptation, for she is afraid to lose, once again, her son. The union occurs and Jocasta is finally happy as a woman who feels to be loved. Pregnant with Oedipus' children several times, she delivers the well-known Eteocles and Polynices, Antigone and Ismene.

While, at first, Oedipus proves to be a considerate king who aims at improving the life of his citizens and the condition of his kingdom, as time passes Jocasta notes he is becoming more and more similar to Laius, with no consideration for Jocasta as a person. For him she becomes "the focus of a sexual fixation. Which is not an expression of love so much as an exercise in ownership" (*The Jocasta Complex*, p. 87), as Jocasta complains. Intelligent as she is, Jocasta finally realizes that Oedipus' attitude toward women is in the end not different from that of his father; in the end, he is a man of his time, a male chauvinist; therefore, she resolves that it is not worth breaking a taboo for such a man. As she did with Laius, so now she denies Oedipus her body. Meanwhile, as in the traditional story, a plague spreads in Thebes, the oracle pertaining to the necessity to punish Laius' murderer is delivered, and Jocasta tries to dissuade Oedipus from undertaking the 'murderer-hunting'. But she soon resigns herself to letting him do whatever he wants: "I am tired to protect him from his fate," Jocasta says after she tries in vain to prevent Oedipus from the investigation, "[and] of putting my intelligence against the games of the gods" (*The Jocasta Complex*, p. 105). From this moment on, the novel's plotline closely resembles Sophocles' one with a few variations, the most important of which is the delivery of a letter from the queen of Corinth, upon Polybus' death. Through this letter Oedipus discovers that he is not the son of the royal couple of Corinth.

293 It should be noted that Molinaro named Polybus' wife Periboea, following a variant of the myth testified to by Apollodorus, *Library* 3.5.7, and Hyginus, *Fabula* 66.

Like Sophocles' Jocasta, Molinaro's almost runs away, once she realizes the truth through the Corinthian shepherd's story; she leaves the room before everything finally appears clear to Oedipus.

Molinaro's Jocasta, too, decides to kill herself, significantly throwing herself from the very cliff that 'belonged' to the Sphinx: "After all, we were defeated by the same man" (*The Jocasta Complex*, p. 117) Jocasta bitterly says. Her suicide is not the suicide of a woman who has discovered the truth and is not able to stand it; it is rather a human admission of defeat, the defeat of one who has dared to pursue happiness through 'unconventional' ways, such as not simply accepting but consciously choosing incest in the hope to 'make it works', despite both the gods' oracle and the social taboo. Molinaro's Jocasta, as all of her female protagonists, is complicated, human, and heroic, in life and death; she in fact dies as a powerful woman rather than a powerless victim, hurling herself into death as she did into life when she wanted to embrace her fate and even seduce it.

The end of the novel is sealed by a new letter to Walrus, which is written by the devoted Antigone, for Oedipus is now blind: Walrus was right, and destiny has prevailed.

In the same year, i.e., in 1994, in another corner of the world, with a completely different setting and partly different authorial intentions, but, again, with a powerful 'voice' being given to Jocasta figure, *The Darker Face of the Earth* by the former U.S. poet laureate Rita Dove appears in its first edition, to be then revised and published in 1996 in its definite version.²⁹⁴ Against the background of the pre-civil War South Carolina, the play consists of a prologue, which is set in 1820, and two acts, which account for the sequel of the prologue's action, after a gap of twenty years. Meant to explore the slavery system as a form of unjust and cruel 'fixed' fate, which entraps not only the slaves themselves but even their white masters,²⁹⁵ particular prominence is given to the role of Jocasta's counterpart, Amalia, daughter of a plantation owner. Emphasis is given to her

294 On this play, with a detailed account of the long process of its composition, see Wetmore (2003) 118–31; Dove, currently a professor of English at the University of Virginia, in Charlottesville (VA), has a very interesting and rich homepage (<http://people.virginia.edu/~rfd4b/>) full both of her own works and varied activity's reports, and of extra material (e.g., interviews, notes, etc.) and/or translation into other languages of her works. This is the case, for instance, for the play under discussion here. For my analysis I am in debt to this website as well. Besides Wetmore and Dove' website, on this play see also Foley (2004) 83–4.

295 This is in particular the viewpoint Wetmore emphasizes in his analysis; a different approach, aimed at giving special space to the figure of Jocasta, is provided by Foley (see above, n. 294).

starting from the prologue,²⁹⁶ which shapes a backstory built on the original Greek myth, with significant differences. In the prologue Amalia is bearing a child to her lover Hector, a black slave. The child is clearly of mixed race parentage, which causes Amalia's husband's, Louis, outrage. Already on the occasion of her child's birth, Amalia shows a strength that would not have a parallel in Sophocles' Jocasta, as she defends her freedom and rebels against her lot by breaking sexual taboos. To Louis's indignation, Amalia in fact responds that she knows that he too exploits the slaves for sexual pleasure, and that he goes after slave girls to do who knows what, "in the name of ownership."²⁹⁷ It is a clear claim of equality, as far as their management of the slaves is concerned: Amalia is not less than Louis, and, in a way, boasts of it. Nonetheless, she does not have the power to keep the child; the scandal must be avoided. Amalia's doctor suggests selling him, and, as she weeps when the child is taken away from her, Louis secretly slips his spurs into the basket holding the child, hoping they can cut the baby and cause him to bleed to death. The child is sold and raised as a slave in another plantation. The prologue ends.

There are evidently several differences from the Greek model, beside the additional space, strength, and independence given to Amalia-Jocasta. One of the major differences is that the biological father of Oedipus, the child raised elsewhere as a slave under "the name of a king", Augustus,²⁹⁸ is not the husband of his mother, which almost foreshadows a double killing, with a different degree of consciousness, and which affects the meaning of the parricide. Also, the destiny of murdering the father and marrying the mother, which would bring about the abandonment to death of a legitimate child by the parents, is not prophesied; there is the birth of an illegitimate child of mixed-race descent, for which the fear of breaking the taboo of incest and parricide is replaced by the fear both of the taboo of miscegenation and of the social stigma that it brings. This fear sets in motion the 'tragedy' to which Amalia, too, must eventually surrender, thus raising questions of female oppression even in contexts of powerful women and disempowered men. Embittered for having been forced to abandon her child, she becomes a masculinized and cruel manager of her father's plantation.

296 I should note that in the revised, definite edition of 1996, lines and characters are somewhat altered specifically to give Amalia (the Jocasta counterpart) more 'power': see Wetmore (2003) 119.

297 Page numbers and quotation are from the third revised edition of the text, Dove (2000). The words cited above are from p. 21.

298 "The name of a King", as ironically Augustus explains when he is introduced to the other slaves in Amalia's plantation and is asked about what kind of name his is. Quotation is from Dove (2000) 147.

In the first act, Amelia appears as a cruel woman verging on evil, twenty years later, while running the plantation. Hector has withdrawn to a solitary life in a swamp, and Louis has gone into his chambers. Augustus has grown as a rebellious slave and arrives in Amelia's 'kingdom' as she has made arrangements to purchase him. Augustus does have characteristics similar to his archetype, as he, too, is known for his cleverness. More importantly, he completely ignores his own identity and is persuaded that he is the son of a black slave who—as it was typical—was abused by a white master to make another slave. After Amalia dares to invite Augustus to her house, since she is curious about him, we learn that Augustus has fostered a bitter hatred against the man he assumes is his father, and that he has been seeking him wherever and whenever possible, in order to exact revenge for his mother and himself over him. Another basic difference from Sophocles' Oedipus surfaces here: the potential parricide would not be unwitting, nor has the character done everything to avoid it; on the contrary, Augustus is looking for it.

Amalia's intention to seduce Augustus is another evidence of the 'untraditional' strength of this Jocasta and contributes to granting her figure a certain prominence. Amalia, so it seems, would have at least two reasons for such a daring act: she might 'use' him to continue to take revenge over her husband's unfaithfulness, and, perhaps more importantly, she might try to control Augustus and keep him 'subjugated'. As a strong, independent, and almost progressive woman, she uses her sexuality to take control of the men in her life who seek to get power over her. In fact, her attempt to tame Augustus eventually leads to a sincere, passionate romance, which develops simultaneously with a slave rebellion instigated by Augustus.

The second act is mostly about the rebellion's plan, which drives Augustus to realize the terrible truth surrounding his real identity, with a double 'parricide' and Amalia's suicide being involved. While meeting with other conspirators in the swamp where Hector lives, Augustus kills him as he overheard about the rebellion and attempted to dissuade Augustus from carrying it out. Augustus, fearing discovery, thus kills Hector, unaware that he is his real father. Meanwhile the relationship with Amalia continues with a struggle: Augustus has to constantly remind Amalia that he is a slave and their relationship will never amount to anything. Amalia, strong though she may be, sadly realizes that she cannot transcend the system that oppresses whites, and limits their choices, as much as blacks; nonetheless, she continues her passionate romance. As the rebellion is approaching, the other conspirators fear that Augustus' romantic relation with Amalia might compromise their plans; therefore, they decide to test Augustus' loyalty to the cause by ordering him to kill both masters, Amalia and Louis. Augustus decides to kill Louis first; but a *coup de théâtre* occurs: failing to defend himself with a gun, Louis cries out that he should have killed

the slave child in the basket. Augustus stops and, à la Sophocles' Oedipus, a series of questions are asked, which brings about an 'assumed' self-discovery: Augustus now thinks that Louis is the white father whom he was seeking for revenge. Before killing him with a knife, he asks about the mother, but only to have a cryptic answer, as Louis tells him to ask Amalia herself. Now Augustus believes that Amalia knew he was Louis' son, and that she was using him only to destroy her husband. Confronting Amalia in anger, Augustus asks her to reveal who among the slaves his mother is. Within a rapid sequence of events, the reversal and recognition take place: Amalia reminds Augustus that Hector withdrew to the swamp when her child was born and that he was told that he had died; this causes Augustus to understand that he is Amalia's and Hector's child. As Amalia herself discovers and faces the truth, she does not withdraw into silence, like in Sophocles, nor does she hang herself. She does speak out, lamenting the irony of her failed attempt to save her beloved baby from disaster. Then, picking up the knife that Augustus drops, she stabs herself (like a hero, one would be tempted to say), thus courageously completing Augustus' task for him. This action seals, in a way, the Jocasta-figure's empowerment. As for Augustus, while heroized for his role in the slave rebellion, he comes to end the play completely destroyed as a human being.

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Throughout the discussion conducted above, more than once I called attention to the lack, in same specific periods, of full rewritings and adaptations specifically of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, and, on the other hand, to the frequent recurrence of motifs which, clearly traceable as they are, can be labelled 'Oedipal'. On occasion, I indulged in using this label conventionally with reference to literary works that might be, and have been, numbered among 'the' adaptations and new renditions of the Sophoclean play.²⁹⁹ But, with a few exceptions,³⁰⁰ I have so far omitted to mention several works that, across time and different cultures, have built on some 'Oedipal motifs' mostly implicitly and, if not foremost, in a way that makes it quite difficult to classify them as

299 An example might be Rita Dove's play: it is mainly included in the adaptations-category, although it might be seen as a work that re-uses some Oedipal motifs (in particular, the crucial role of fate in Oedipus' story), rather than adapt the original Sophoclean plotline to explore different issues.

300 See above, e.g., n. 130.

adaptations of the ancient play.³⁰¹ In truth the frequency and abundance of the recurrence of ‘Oedipal motifs’ in works of literature is so extensive that it would deserve a separate discussion; this, on the other hand, would be beyond the scope of the present study. What follows is thus a quick, and inevitably not exhaustive, outline of this category of works, ranging from the late-19th century to the last decades of the 20th century, with some features being presented in detail on occasion. It goes without saying that this outline will be arranged by ‘Oedipal motifs’ rather than chronologically.

Parricide (real and /or symbolic) and the related father-son (generational) conflict, often filtered through Freud, seem to be among the most exploited ‘Oedipal motifs’. Inspired by Sophocles’ Oedipus, they were certainly the fulcrum of *The Brothers Karamozov* (1880) by the Russian novelist Fyodor M. Dostoevsky (1821–1881)³⁰² and have been recurrent motifs in the Russian literature of this time and beyond.³⁰³ An original re-use of this specific Oedipal motif, i.e., parricide, also characterizes the 1930 play *Stasera si recita a soggetto* (“Tonight We Improvise”) by the Italian dramatist, novelist, and poet, Luigi Pirandello (1867–1936), who was awarded the Noble Prize in Literature in 1934.³⁰⁴ Pirandello uses the parricide motif and the theme of father-son conflict of power, which is often associated with the ancient story—or, better, with its political interpretation³⁰⁵—to convey his theatrical poetics, in particular with reference to the interaction between director and author in a dramatic production. Reacting to some current trends privileging the director’s role, even at the expense of the author’s one,³⁰⁶ Pirandello identifies Oedipus, the swollen-feet/lame ‘tyrant’, with *Tonight We Improvise’s*

301 As we shall see, this same difficulty also extends to adaptations for the stage and for the screen.

302 As is well known, this Russian novel was also Freud’s object of interest. Freud indeed contributed to a scholarly collection on Dostoevskij’s *The Brothers Karamazov* with an introductory article entitled *Dostojewski und die Vätertötung* (“Dostoevskij and Parricide”), published in 1928: see Jones (1964) 590. In that article, Freud argued that it is not a coincidence that some of the best masterpieces of world literature (such as *Oedipus the King*, *Hamlet*, and *The Brothers Karamozov*) are all concerned with parricide: see, e.g., Beltrametti/Pagani (2013) 191–2.

303 See Beltrametti/Pagani (2013).

304 Although Pirandello never wrote an *Oedipus* (whether in the form of a play or in the form of a novel), Oedipus’ story seems to be the constant hypotext running through his entire theatrical production: Nobili (2012) 263–5. On the relation between *Tonight We Improvise* and Sophocles’ play, see, in particular, Nobili (2012). An interesting analysis emphasizing Oedipus’ presence in another Pirandellian masterpiece, i.e., *Il fu Mattia Pascal* (“The Later Mattia Pascal,” 1904), is provided by Harrison (1999).

305 See, e.g., Avezzi (2008) 16–8.

306 According to Nobili (2012) 266 with n. 8.

main character Hinkfuss, the crippled/lame director³⁰⁷ who ‘tyrannizes’ the cast and arrogates to himself all the ‘power’ over the production, ‘dethroning’, i.e., metaphorically killing, the author. In Pirandello’s poetic discourse, the author, more precisely the playwright, is the ‘father’ of the theatrical work. To hold the power over a renovated kingdom, i.e., out of metaphor, of a new kind of theater, the former king must be eliminated. In Pirandello’s view, the new theatrical trend which privileges the director’s role means the ruin of the theater itself: Hinkfuss, like Oedipus, is thus ironically the ‘savior’ who plagues his own kingdom. Apparently in Pirandello’s original re-use, these Oedipal motifs become a metatheatrical device.³⁰⁸

As the above discussion has repeatedly pointed out, parricide filtered through Freud’s interpretation would spring primarily from the son’s desire to replace his own father in the family as partner of his own mother, i.e., it couples with an unconscious (and unsolved) incestuous attraction to, and obsessive affection toward, the maternal figure. Any literary character affected by the so-called ‘Oedipus complex’ would inevitably evoke Sophocles’ play in terms of a Freudian re-use of the ‘Oedipal triangle’. Moving on in this peculiar category of re-use and ‘adaptations’, the explicit presence of the ancient hero’s name in the title would compel us to mention the 1954 novel by the German writer Gregor von Rezzori (1914–1998), *Oedipus siege bei Stalingrad* (“Oedipus at Stalingrad”).³⁰⁹ Set in 1938–1939-Berlin, the story of Traugott von Jassilowski, the ‘Oedipus’ of this novel, in truth, does not have much to do with the plot of Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*; but he undergoes some experiences that refer both to *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonos*. As for the first, the connection can be detected only, as mentioned above, through the Freudian interpretation. Traugott is in fact affected by the Oedipus complex; his neurotic behavior offers an example of the effects of that complex when it is unsolved: he does have problems in his relation with women, as he sees his mother in anyone, and thus experiences the relation as incest. His feelings are *à la Freud* projected in a dream, which von Rezzori might have built on the famous dream that Sophocles’ Jocasta refers to Oedipus (Sophocles, *Oedipus the Kings* 979–82) by varying it: while in Jocasta’s words there is no mention of the

307 Hinkfuss is a German-rooted name, meaning ‘lame, walking with a limp’ (< *hinke* = crippled; *fuss* = foot), a clear calque of the Greek *Oidipous* (on which, see above, 160–1); Pirandello himself admitted it: see Pupo (2002) 437–41.

308 See, e.g., Nobili (2012) 265.

309 The 1954 one is the last, definite version of a novel von Rezzori started writing far earlier, and published under other titles (*Oedipus* and *Oedipus vor Stalingrad* [“Oedipus at Stalingrad”]: see Schumacher (2006) 22. Schumacher (2006) is the main source for the discussion of this novel.

father's figure, in Traugott's dream the action focuses precisely on the father, as he kills him while he has intercourse with his mother. For Traugott the dream is a revelation, i.e., an eventual explanation of his obsessive attachment to his mother and hatred toward the father. From the 'guilt' and related anguish, that have come to the surface, he moves toward a possible redemption when, at the outbreak of World War II, he enlists. He 'walks' throughout the war until he 'stops' at the Battle of Stalingrad (1942–1943). Here he disappears as if carried away by some mysterious forces: Stalingrad like *Colonus*—and perhaps the title *Oedipus at Stalingrad*, by which the novel is more commonly known, was meant to evoke the title *Oedipus at Colonus*. Beside his disappearance, Traugott's 'walking away' from his previous life-status, and his seeking redemption, would thus imply a further connection, slight as it is, with Sophocles' late play about Oedipus.

Oedipus' walking, both in reality and figuratively speaking, is associated with another far important 'Oedipal motif': the investigation and journey of self-discovery and the related essential nature of this hero, i.e., his being a seeker of truth. Interestingly, this motif subtly undercuts the last novel of the renowned 20th-century Italian poet, novelist, and literary critic Cesare Pavese (1908–1950), i.e., *La luna e i falò* ("The Moon and the Bonfires"), published in 1950. As a matter of fact, Pavese had previously, and explicitly, engaged with classical literature—more precisely with classical mythology—in *Dialoghi con Leucò* ("Dialogues with Leucò").³¹⁰ Written between 1945 and 1947, this is a collection of twenty-seven philosophical dialogues that the author set between (usually) two classical Greek characters, including Oedipus. Sophocles' hero is in fact the character of two dialogues: one with Tiresias, significantly entitled *I ciechi* ("The Blind ones"), and another with a beggar, set after Oedipus' discovery of the terrible truth when the hero undertakes his wandering in exile. This dialogue is significantly entitled *La strada* ("The Road") and is all about human destiny. In these dialogues the presence of two other basic 'Oedipal motifs' (i.e., knowledge/blindness and destiny) is apparent, as it was programmatically contemplated by the author. Differently, in the above-mentioned novel *The Moon and the Bonfires*, the identification of the investigation and journey of self-discovery-motif rather reflects an original reading applied to this work in the light of the influence that the Italian Mario Untersteiner, a renowned Greek philologist (1899–1981), exerted

310 In general on Pavese's re-use of Greek myths, see Cavallini (2014). In particular on Pavese's *The Moon and the Bonfires* and its connection with Sophocles' Oedipus, see Rosa (1999). My analysis is much in debt to Rosa.

on Pavese with his monographs on Sophocles and on Greek mythology.³¹¹ A subtle analysis of *The Moon and the Bonfires* allows to see an interesting, possible overlap between the essentials of Oedipus' investigation and journey, which leads to the discovery of his identity, and those of the protagonist of the novel. The latter is Anguilla ("Eel"), an emigrant who returns to his Italian small hometown in the *Langhe* (a region in Piedmont),³¹² after having made his fortune in the United States. He, who, like Oedipus, is a 'bastard' (does not know who his father is),³¹³ returns precisely to find himself by visiting the place where he grew up. Being in search of his true identity Anguilla engages in a sort of investigation, seeking the truth in the past. Despite the realization of how painful and tragic acquiring that knowledge would be, he chooses to know at any cost. And, once the tragic truth comes out, Anguilla 'goes in exile', i.e., leaves his hometown to follow his final destiny.

The 'inquiry-motif', i.e., the 'official investigation' of a murder, which turns into an investigation of the investigator's identity—for, by irony, he ends up being the 'wanted' murderer—is another notorious basic 'Oedipal thematic branch'. Whether with an intentional reference to the Sophoclean archetype or not, it goes without saying that this motif would be the easiest one to be variously re-used in detective stories. Indeed, it constitutes the backbone of the *nouveau roman* ("New Novel")³¹⁴ entitled *Les Gommages* ("The Erasers") by the French writer and filmmaker Alain Robbe-Grillet (1922–2008), published in 1953. This is a detective / mystery murder story built on some subtle intertextual

311 Rosa (1999) 447–8 with nn. 16, 17.

312 It should be noted that Pavese's hometown, Santo Stefano Belbo, is located in the Langhe, too.

313 As it happened to Oedipus, his name, Anguilla ("Eel"), in fact is not his birth name; it is rather a nickname.

314 The *nouveau roman*, also called 'anti-novel' or '*avant garde* novel', is a mid-20th-century literary genre that developed first in France. It breaks all the conventions of the traditional novel by ignoring its basic elements, such as plot, linear narrative, dialogue, and human interest, and by replacing them with new features, such as the casual arrangement of events, intersecting/overlapping stories, ambiguity of meaning, vaguely identified characters, and interest in precise physical descriptions of objects. Robbe-Grillet's novel *The Erasers* echoes the 'protagonism' that, in this kind of novel, informs objects/physical things; it hints at a specific kind of eraser for which the protagonist was obsessively looking in the stationery shop whose owner is the wife of the protagonist's father, i.e., a slight counterpart of Jocasta. On this novel see Astier (1974) 191–215 (who analyzes the intertextuality between the novel and the Greek play in terms of parody: esp. pp. 191–3); Chadwick/Harger-Grinling (1984); Pasco (2002) 161–83, esp. 173–83; Paduano (2008) 160–4.

references to the story of Sophocles' Oedipus.³¹⁵ Like Oedipus, the protagonist, the detective Wallas is seeking the killer in a murder that, differently from the ancient story, has not yet occurred. It will occur unwittingly by the hands of the detective himself, on the grounds of legitimate self-defense. What is more, the killed one is the biological father of the detective who, like Oedipus, was not aware of that. Like in Sophocles' play, the protagonist undergoes a 'reversal of fortune', a sudden change of status: from being the investigator to being the criminal for whom he was looking. And like in Sophocles' play, the investigator-turned-into-a criminal ends up being an unintentional parricide, which implies a discovery (although partial in the case of Wallas) of his own identity.³¹⁶ Among intertextual clues suggesting that the novelist was clearly, and consciously, playing with Sophocles' drama, mention should be made of a drunk who, speaking in riddles, replaces, in a way, the ancient Sphinx. Interestingly the riddle is adapted in a way that clearly suggests 'Oedipus' as an answer, thus making explicit and certain the novel's interplay with Sophocles' work. The riddle indeed reads: "What animal is a parricide in the morning, incestuous at noon, and blind in the evening . . .",³¹⁷ which—as anyone can realize—mirrors the temporal and causal sequence of the mythic Oedipus' actions, i.e., the two 'crimes' and the final realization of the truth coupled with the self-blinding.

And the riddle of the Sphinx, i.e., the crucial encounter between the monster and the hero which both seals Oedipus' reputation as the hero of intellectual superiority, capable of knowing the answer to most difficult questions, and, ironically, sets in motion his tragic demise, is another of the 'Oedipal motifs' that has enjoyed much success. An interesting re-use of this motif, in particular with reference to Oedipus as a metaphor for the one who knows and is capable of solving aenigmata, can be identified in the subdivisions of a famous Italian magazine of crosswords, puzzles, and rebus, i.e., *La Settimana Enigmistica* ("The Weekly Magazine of Aenigmata"), launched in the 1930s. Three sections refer, even in their title, to the Oedipal motif here under

315 Here I shall provide only some of the most evident evocative items; for a broader report, see Pasco (2002) 175–6; Paduano (2008) 160–1 n. 49.

316 Wallas' is a partial discovery of his own identity in that, being a natural child, he did not know his real father's identity, only; while he did know his mother's one. Consequently, the incest motif is almost absent; according to Paduano (2008) 161, a faint echo can be detected in Wallas' lust for Evelyn, i.e., his father's wife; in terms of family ties, Evelyn would, thus, be Wallas' step-mother.

317 Page numbers and quotations are from Robbe-Grillet (1953). The words quoted above are from p. 234.

discussion: *La pagina della Sfinge* ("The page of the Sphinx"), which is a page full of riddles and anagrams usually written in verse; *L'antologia di Edipo* ("Oedipus' Anthology"), a page of rebus; and *L'Edipeo enciclopedico* ("The Oedipal Encyclopedia"), a space reserved for a 'true-false' quiz.

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

Perhaps ironically, the tragedy notoriously proposed as 'perfect' by Aristotle, the one that can claim an extensive repertoire of re-elaborations fully exploiting the symbolic potency of the character and the themes of his *tragedy*, lacks an equivalent abundance of iconographic representations in ancient times. Parricide and incest, the two most popular hallmarks of Oedipus that define, in a way, his *true* identity, are almost completely 'missing'.³¹⁸ The difficulty of transferring such events into images capable of conveying the deep tragic sense that they assume for the hero and the dynamics of the story might have been the reason for such a striking absence.³¹⁹ Correspondingly, a motif that seems to have been perceived by the ancient artists as more visually representational occurs quite often in the 5th–4th century BC black- and red-figure vase paintings: the encounter of Oedipus with the Sphinx. It has been noted³²⁰ that 90% of the ancient iconographic representations of Oedipus pertains to that specific, crucial detail of the story, which in Sophocles' play surfaces more than once but is not staged.³²¹ The vase painters depicted this motif over and over, engaging in a wide range of variations: Oedipus appears alone in

318 If any of these crucial motifs appears, it happens very rarely and late in the 5th century BC: see, e.g., Krauskopf (1986) 333 with n. 30, who mentions an attic *krater* (large vase, mainly used to mix wine and water) where the scene of Laius' murder was represented. For Oedipus' myth in ancient art, see, in particular, Krauskopf (1986; 1994). See also Taplin (2007) esp. 90–3. A useful list of images, spanning from the Middle Ages to the early 21st century, compiled by an art librarian, Sara Harrington, in consultation with Lowell Edmunds, in 2006, can be found at http://web.archive.org/web/20060303095126/http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/rr_gateway/research_guides/art/art_lib/oedipus_art.shtml. A broader list, articulated into two sections (Painting/drawing and Sculpture) is in Esposito (2014) II: 913.

319 Chiodi/Franzoni (2004) 241. Krauskopf (1986) 336 also argues that the cerebral nature of Sophocles' tragedies is in particular what made it difficult to represent their stories and characters in art.

320 Krauskopf (1986) 327.

321 See, e.g., Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 30–4; 46–52; 1196; 1524–7.

front of the Sphinx, or accompanied by a crowd of Thebans; seated on a rock or standing up; sometimes dressed like a wayfarer, i.e., with a *petasos* (a sort of sun hat) and a *chlamys* (a short cloak), and sometimes leaning on a cane. The Sphinx appears always seated; what changes is where she sits: on a column, or on a rock, or just on the ground. It is around mid-5th century BC that the iconographic model with Oedipus alone before the Sphinx starts becoming the 'standard' one. The most well-known specimen of this kind is the Attic red-figure *kylix* (a wine-drinking cup),³²² attributed to the Oedipus painter and datable around 470 BC. Here Oedipus, dressed in traveller's cape and hat, is seated on a rock, and the Sphinx is seated on a column. Oedipus is portrayed while looking at the Sphinx as he ponders the riddle, with his chin resting on one hand as though deep in thought—a gesture that visually expresses his perplexity and mental effort. Between the two figures there is an inscription that suggests the moment that the painter tried to capture: exactly the positioning of the riddle.

The riddle itself as well as the solution provided by Oedipus have certainly challenged the artists from classical antiquity on. The difficulty in conveying the decisive moment of Oedipus' answer through images led ancient artists to represent the hero pointing at himself with his hand,³²³ as if say: "I understood; the answer is 'Man', who crawls on all four legs in the 'morning' of his life (childhood), walks upright in the 'noontime' of his maturity (adulthood), and leans on a stick in the 'evening' of his lifetime (old age). Given the mention of legs and walking, it has been argued that the deformity of Oedipus' feet gave him a clue for the answer."³²⁴

As it might be easily inferable from the 'thinker'-shaped portrayal of Oedipus before the Sphinx, in the majority of the representations of the episode in the ancient art, the artists seem to have meant to emphasize the sharp intelligence of the hero, in accordance with Sophocles' references to Oedipus' encounter with that creature (e.g., ll. 391–8);³²⁵ they have thus contributed to celebrating the superiority and victory of Oedipus' intelligence over a brutal monster. This interpretation both of the story and of its figurative version is to be found

322 It is referred as *Vatican Kylix*, as it belongs to the collection of the Vatican Museum; for details, including the catalogue number, see Kauskopf (1986) 332 with n. 25.

323 On some gems and reliefs Oedipus is portrayed in the act of giving the solution by pointing at himself as being a man: Lauriola (2011a) 167 with n. 37.

324 On the etymology and significance of Oedipus' name in the context of his tragic story, see above, 160–1. It should be here noted that Oedipus' feet-clue will be fully exploited later in the 19th-century, in the famous painting of the French artist Auguste-Domenique Ingres: see below, 250–3.

325 On Oedipus' intellectual sharpness, see above, 159–60 with n. 39.

enriched with further meanings for centuries afterwards as well. Already in late Antiquity, however, this general interpretation of the artistic renditions of the episode is subjected to more profound analysis, as is proven in particular by a painting on an Egyptian tumb, datable around the 3rd century AD.³²⁶ In this fresco a new, peculiar character—or, to better say it, entity—is present at the moment of the solution of the riddle: *Zetema*, i.e., the personification of the desire for searching, inquiring, and knowing.³²⁷ Moreover, the same fresco portrays another important stage of Oedipus' story: the murder of Laius, which appears significantly instigated by another new figure, *Agnoia*, i.e., the personification of ignorance. Both new figures, *Zetema* and *Agnoia*, embody concepts that are crucial to Oedipus' life and to the understanding of his tragic story. As is known, Oedipus killed his father in complete 'ignorance/unawareness' (*agnoia*), and through a persistent, intelligent investigation (*zetema*), he finally came to know the terrible truth. *Zetema*—i.e., the new figure present and witnessing Oedipus' solution of the riddle—thus advances Oedipus from not knowing (*Agnoia*) to knowing. In this light *Zetema* represents freedom from ignorance which, after the inevitably deep sufferings that knowledge 'has inflicted', brings about a state of peace, a kind of happiness that does not belong to our world. The funerary context of the scene might thus gesture towards a new interpretation of the encounter between Oedipus and the Sphinx: it would be no longer the icon of the heroic triumph over brutal monsters through man's intelligence; it would rather represent man's overcoming of his destiny through a liberating death, after reaching the bottom of misfortune under *Agnoia*' and *Zetema*'s wing.³²⁸

The episode of the Oedipus and the Sphinx is certainly the main focus of ancient representations;³²⁹ nonetheless, in 5th- and 4th-century BC pottery

326 See Krauskopf (1986) 340 with further bibliography in n. 56. On this work, from the perspective of *Oedipus at Colonus*, see also below, 352–3.

327 More properly, the term ζήτημα means "research, search for, inquiry".

328 About the representation of Oedipus' encounter with the Sphinx in funerary contexts, i.e., on sarcophagi, as also justifiable for the link between the Sphinxes and the death, see Krauskopf (1986) 328–9. On the Sphinx's connection with death, see also Lauriola (2011a) 164 with n. 26. A survey of the Sphinx' varied symbolic meanings is in Regier (2004) esp. 153–96.

329 Chiodi/Franzoni (2004) 243 fairly observe that the episode was so popular that it also prompted parodistic version in the arts as well as in theater. Regarding this, mention should be made of Aeschylus' satyr drama *Sphinx* (ca. 470/460 BC), which seems to have inspired a related representation on a *krater* saved in Lecce Museum (Italy): see Krauskopf (1986) 331–3 with n. 22.

both from the Greek mainland and from the Magna Graecia, it is possible to recognize a few other crucial themes, although scholars are not always sure about their identification and their reference exactly to Sophocles' play. An example is the theme of Oedipus' exposure on an amphora datable around the mid-5th century BC:³³⁰ it portrays a shepherd with baby Oedipus in his arms. The names inscribed on the object allow such an identification: Oidipodes and Euphorbos. As for the latter, considering that in Sophocles shepherds and messengers are anonymous, it is not sure whether this Euphorbos represents Laius' shepherd, who was put in charge to abandon the infant, or Polybus' one, who received and rescued the infant.

Themes that possibly trace scenes inspired by the dramatic performances of the play are to be found in the 4th-century BC pottery produced in South Italy and Sicily. A Sicilian *kalyx-krater* (ca. 330 BC) reflects the scene with the Old Corinthian, Oedipus, and Jocasta.³³¹ The figures stand on a long strip of floor with pillars at the back, suggestive of a stage. On the left is a small old man who has usually been identified as the messenger from Corinth, and the moment should be when he is telling Oedipus about his past, how he received him as a baby on Mount Cithaeron (cf. Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 1009–46). In the center stands Oedipus, and on the right a sad-and concerned-looking woman who is raising her cloak to her face. It is Jocasta, portrayed in her silent recognition of the horrific truth. Indeed, the entire scene is usually interpreted as one which captures a powerful moment and supposes a subtle appreciation by the viewer: Jocasta's wordless moment of horror, when she has realized the truth.

The array of themes expanded from early modern and modern art on:³³² the self-blinding, strikingly absent in ancient iconography, occurs in medieval manuscripts,³³³ while the incest-motif is evoked in an early 16th-century tapestry (ca. 1510) where Oedipus appears at the wedding with Jocasta. The theme of the exposure and rescue of baby Oedipus occurs a little more

330 See Krauskopf (1986) 333–4 with n. 32.

331 The discussion of this Sicilian item is mainly based on Taplin (2007) 90–2. As this scholar admits, doubts surround the exact reconstruction and interpretation of the scene; the one Taplin chooses—as he says (92)—“makes good sense”. On this vase see also Krauskopf (1986) 334.

332 Besides the list mentioned above, (n. 318: Harrington/Edmunds [2006]), for a concise overview, see, e.g., Huhn/Vöhler (2010) 463.

333 As far as the blinding motif is concerned, it seems that the ancient iconography lacks it; there is, however, a 2nd-century BC urn, referred to as Volterra urn, whose depiction hints at a different version of this motif, perhaps under the influence of Euripides' *Oedipus* (on which, see above, 163–5): in this urn Oedipus is represented as being blinded by two warriors: see Chiodi/Franzoni (2004) 243.

frequently. For instance, it was depicted by the Italian Baroque painter Salvatore Rosa (1615–1673) in his hatching entitled *Edipo Infante* (“Infant Oedipus”, 1663), where the baby appears hung by his feet on a tree;³³⁴ and it reappears in a marble sculpture, *Oedipe et Phorbas* (“Oedipus and Phorbas”), by the French artist Felix Lecompte (1737–1817), in the second half of the 18th century. A few decades later, at the dawn of the 19th century, with a shift of focus to the rescue-theme, the motif reappears in the painting *Edipo sciolto dai lacci da un pastore* (“Oedipus freed from his binding by a shepherd”, 1817) by the Italian painter Francesco Nenci (1781–1850): here, too, a tree is depicted as the presumed place of Oedipus’ exposure, and a shepherd is portrayed holding the baby head-over-heels as he has just untied the laces around his feet, which had kept him hung on the tree’s branch.³³⁵

With Nenci’s work and a very few other exceptions,³³⁶ the theme of the encounter between Oedipus and the Sphinx becomes popular once again in the 19th and, although partially, in the 20th centuries. In the 19th century, in particular, the motif takes on different undertones: from the neoclassical representation as a challenge of wisdom in the works of the French painter Jean-Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), to the erotic nuance in the paintings of Symbolist artists—such as the French Gustave Moreau (1826–1898), the Belgian Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921), and the German Franz von Stuck (1863–1928)—to the medieval mystical connotation in the work of the French painter Odilon Redon (1840–1916).³³⁷

As emblematic of a challenge of wisdom, which corroborates the motif of the supremacy of Oedipus’ intellect as being the essence of the episode itself, is the meaning generally given to the first most famous 19th-century representation of this motif: *Oedipe et le Sphinx* (“Oedipus and the Sphinx”) by Jean-Auguste-Domenique Ingres.³³⁸ This interpretation rests upon the symbolic significance associated with Sphinx: regarded as being as mysterious and indecipherable as her riddles, she has become “the symbol of symbolism itself”, as the late-Enlightenment philosopher Friedrich Hegel labeled her (*Aesthetics*

334 See, e.g., Ozzola (1908) 181; 196; 199.

335 Now in the Gipsoteca Bartolini, at the Gallery of the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence (Italy). A similar iconographic theme characterizes Jean-François Millet’s oil painting, *Oedipus Taken Down from the Tree* (1847), now in the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

336 This statement is mainly based on Harrington/Edmunds list, which I mentioned above (n. 318). ‘Oedipus and Antigone’ is the only other more frequent theme I could identify.

337 The discussion of Ingres’ and Moreau’s paintings is mainly drawn on Lauriola (2011a) esp. 166–73.

338 As far as this interpretation is concerned, see also Tusini (2012) esp. 239–41.

2, 83). From the perspective of Sophocles and his ancient fellows, the prevailing symbolism, however, pertains to intellectual prowess and wisdom. The riddle itself, in fact, “represented wisdom—both in the form of the Sphinx’s preternatural insight and in the form of Oedipus’ human rationality—as embracing every aspect of mortal existence.”³³⁹ By correctly answering the Sphinx’s riddle, Oedipus would demonstrate that he knew all things about life, from cradle to grave. This triumph of human intelligence and nobility over a monstrous and mysterious adversary specifically informs Ingres’ works.³⁴⁰ The French artist painted the episode three times—the first time in 1808, as the work that he had to submit to his Parisian professor as indication of his progress, while he was a scholarship-winning art student at the French Academy in Rome. The second time was in 1827: in this second version Ingres expanded the canvas to include the landscape vista at the right side of the painting and darkened the shadows. A far different version was completed in 1864. Out of the three versions, the painting of *Oedipe et le Sphinx* that by metonymy—so to speak—evokes Ingres’ name is the first one. In this painting the calm attitude of Oedipus is remarkable: the hero does not seem to be afraid of the Sphinx—despite the evident traces of her long-term savagery (i.e., the crumbling bones of the skeleton of an old victim and the cadaverous flesh of the foot of a new victim). More importantly, he does not seem to make any particular effort to understand and solve the riddle. He in fact does not knit his brows in strenuous thought. On the contrary, he exudes self-confidence and seems rather to show that he has the situation under control. Probably evoking the above-mentioned ancient iconographic tradition that represented Oedipus pointing to himself while giving the solution to the riddle, Ingres added a more complex gestural twist. In Ingres, too, Oedipus points to himself with his right hand to indicate that the answer is ‘Man’; but he also seems to be portrayed as explaining the first point of the riddle with the index finger of the left hand extended, as if to say ‘during the infancy man walks on all four.’³⁴¹ If the hand gestures might symbolize the solution, both partially and generally, what turns the triumph of the force of reason into the main theme of the painting is the concentrated gaze of Oedipus. His eyes express power and control over the Sphinx; they are the source of a force of penetrating vision that enables him to penetrate the secrets of existence and of nature.³⁴² The same self-confident, penetrating, controlling gaze characterizes

339 Buller (2003) 73.

340 See, e.g., Rosenblum (1967) 80; Rubin (1979) 130, 132–3.

341 See, e.g., Rubin (1979) 131; Condon (1983) 38; Regier (2004) 79–80.

342 Rubin (1979) 133, on which Lauriola (2011a) 170 n. 42.

Oedipus in the last version of Ingres' painting, which presents some significant changes. For instance, the position of the two figures is reversed, with Oedipus on the left and the Sphinx on the right; and the gaze of the Sphinx, who looks away from Oedipus in horror,³⁴³ is strikingly intense. As is well known, the solution of the riddle seals her end: the Sphinx no longer has any reason to exist. According to tradition, she then threw herself off the rock.

The French symbolist artist Gustave Moreau is the first famous painter, after Ingres, to have portrayed the episode of Oedipus and the Sphinx. His *Oedipe et le Sphinx* was first exhibited at the Salon of 1864, the same year in which Ingres produced his third version. At first glance, one almost inevitably notices in Moreau's rendition the strongly erotic overtone of the scene, and this is indeed what scholars tend to single out in their analyses of Moreau's painting. His version inaugurates, in fact, the Sphinx amoureuse theme.³⁴⁴ No intellectual contest transpires from his canvas: the close physical proximity of the two figures and their reciprocal gaze suggest a rather erotic scene.³⁴⁵ As to the proximity, the Sphinx seems to voluptuously clasp and cling to Oedipus' chest with her lion's paws,³⁴⁶ while Oedipus' unseen right hand may be holding the lower left leg of the Sphinx to prevent her from falling.³⁴⁷ Their intense, mutual gaze may recall the ancient motif, which has become almost a commonplace, according to which love, like an arrow shot from a bow, strikes the lovers' souls by passing through their eyes, 'the window of the soul'.³⁴⁸ Theirs is a fatal embrace symbolizing the *Eros-Thanatos* theme (i.e., the connection between love and death), widespread in ancient Greek culture.³⁴⁹ The erotic overtone has led critics and scholars to emphasize the female component of the Sphinx to the point of wondering "if the picture was not meant to evoke the enigma of woman herself."³⁵⁰ But a reading of the painter's notebooks

343 "Reading the painting left to right, her expression is the finale": Regier (2004) 82.

344 See, e.g., Delcourt (1944) 118–33; Nissim (1989) 229–30; Chiodi/Franzoni (2004) 242–3; Regier (2004) 117–9. In my opinion, this theme is taken to extremes in the paintings of the decadent artist Franz Von Stuck (1863–1928), *The Sphinx* and *The Kiss of the Sphinx* (both 1895): see below, 253.

345 See also Tusini (2012) 241–2.

346 With reference to this representation of the Sphinx, see, in particular, Dorra (1973) 133.

347 Regier (2004) 96.

348 See, e.g., Euripides, *Hippolytus* 525–7. On the association between love and eyes, see, e.g., Parry (1992) 265–70; Rizzini (1998) 118–22.

349 On the connection of *eros* and *thanatos*, wedding and funeral, a widespread theme in Greek Literature, see, e.g., Rehm (1994). Further information about the relevance of this theme to Moreau's painting is in Lauriola (2011a) 172 with n. 50.

350 Dorra (1973) 133.

reveals something different: the Sphinx is described as a “chimera vile but also attractive like matter, its head [wings] promising the ideal but with the body of the monster, the carnivorous animal that tears up and destroy.”³⁵¹ Moreau’s Sphinx is thus not the aenigma of woman herself nor the aenigma of life; it is the material life itself, which is attractive but vile, debasing and destructive. It must thus be dominated by man. “Man defies,” Moreau wrote, “the heady and brutish beckoning of matter, and the eye fixed upon his ideal, he walks confidently after having stepped over it”. According to Moreau’s own reflections, his painting seems to symbolize neither a fatal erotic relation nor the celebration of man’s intellect and rationalism.³⁵² It represents rather the dialectic of the conflict ‘spirit/matter’ with the triumph of the spirit.³⁵³

A mystical/spiritual overtone characterizes the rendition of the episode by the French painter Odilon Redon in 1894, significantly entitled *Le chevalier mystique (Oedipe et le Sphinx)* (“The mystical knight [Oedipus and the Sphinx]”). Realized with pastels and soft colors, the encounter does not bear any sense of horror and fear, nor does it convey the contest-idea. Oedipus is turned into a Medieval knight who seems to have arrived in a temple as a completion of a mission (perhaps symbolized by the ‘trophy’ he brought, i.e., a not identifiable cut-off head). The Sphinx is thus turned into a sort of guardian angel as her wings resemble indeed those of an angel rather than those of an ‘ugly’ bird. Her face expression seems benevolent and friendly rather than terrifying.

Just one year later, in 1895, the German symbolist artist Franz von Stuck strongly built on the erotic motif, which has visibly surfaced in Moreau’s work although, as we have just seen, the painter’s intentions gestured to another interpretation. Von Stuck’s erotic connotation is far more evident, if not provocative, for he eliminates any physical distance between the two characters. His painting is indeed entitled *Der Kuss der Sphinx* (“The Kiss of the Sphinx”): the two are bound in a deadly kiss; Oedipus is no longer in control, nor does he show a degree of supremacy. He too becomes a victim of the Sphinx, which definitely has turned into a *femme fatale*.³⁵⁴

Similarly characterized by a strong erotic overtone is *Die Zärtlichkeit der Sphinx* (“The caress/affection of the Sphinx”, 1896) by the Belgian artist Fernand Khnopff: an ephebic-like Oedipus seems to have already solved the

351 Dorra (1973) 133–4 with n. 16.

352 For an interpretation of Moreau’s painting as a representation of the traditional theme of the victory of intelligence (symbolized by the hero’s intense gaze), see, e.g., Napolitano Valditara (1997) 71–2.

353 Dorra (1973) 134–7.

354 See, e.g., Huhn/Vöhler (2012) 463.

riddle, which ‘tames’, in a way, the hybrid creature, the Sphinx, painted with a cheetah/panther-like body. Such a body combines the enigmatic, the dangerous, and the exotic—all suggestive of fatal seduction—which were common guises for a *fin-de-siècle femme fatale*. She does not hurl herself from the cliff, as according to the tradition; on the contrary, she voluptuously comes closer to the youth and rests next to him, cheek to cheek.³⁵⁵

This particular motif of Oedipus’ tragedy continues to exert attraction and interest on 20th-century artists as well. Almost inevitably, from this moment on, most of the artistic renditions are subjected to the influence of Freud’s theory, as the artists often turn their works of art into their own ‘digestion’ of the Oedipus complex.³⁵⁶ Such might be the case of the surrealist painting *Oedipus Rex* (“Oedipus the King”) by the German painter and sculptor Max Ernst (1891–1976). Ernst was one of the first artists to apply Freud’s dream theory to works of art, in order to investigate his own psyche and to explore the source of his own creativity.³⁵⁷ Ernst’s provocative and innovative exploration of his unconscious through dreamlike imaginary, while mocking at social conventions, led him to unleash his primal emotions and reveal personal traumas by making them the main subject of his paintings and collages. In his *Oedipus Rex* (1922), as in general in his works, there is no clear narrative: there is no Oedipus or a Sphinx, and the identification with this mythological story is allowed only through the legenda on the lower part of the painting, which consists of a (seemingly?) chaotic assemblage of cryptically symbolic objects that betray a disguised awareness of his own Oedipal issue.³⁵⁸ Ernst’s painting seems to be a Sphinx itself, i.e., a riddle whose solution rests upon his personal re-elaboration of Freud’s theory. On the left side of the painting one sees male fingers holding a walnut: the tips of two fingers sticking out from behind the walnut significantly evoke the shape of a mother’s breast; the metallic tool perforating the fingers clearly recalls the piercing of Oedipus’ feet; at the same time, that tool resembles a saw which, given the Oedipal context, would suggest in turn an association with the idea of castration.³⁵⁹ The painting has in fact several sexual undercurrents. The walnut is a symbol for the female, the crack in it is a symbol for the vulva,³⁶⁰ and the cracking of the walnut by the male hands is a metaphor for sexual intercourse. Related to this is the presence of an arrow perforating the

355 See Chiodi/Fronzoni (2004) 242–3; Tusini (2012) 243–4.

356 Regarding this, see, e.g., Tusini (2012) 244–45.

357 My analysis of Ernst’s *Oedipus Rex* is drawn upon Tusini (2012) 245–6.

358 See Lippard (1970) 188–95; Camfield (1993) 113.

359 See Gee (1981) 86.

360 See Legge (1986) 52.

walnut, which also might hint at Oedipus' self-destructive act. On the right side of the painting two big cut heads appear. The first is that of a bird, which seems to have been a constant in Ernst's imagery and hallucinations, as he had associated his sister's birth with his parrot's death.³⁶¹ The second head is that of a bull, suggestive of the paternal figure and authority.

A different moment of this 'iconic' episode of Oedipus' story is portrayed in the painting *Edipo a Tebe* ("Oedipus [arrives] at Thebes", 1933) by one of the most brilliant Italian painters of the first half of the 20th century, Corrado Cagli (1910–1976). The moment is subsequent to the fateful encounter, as Oedipus enters Thebes amid a welcome by the local crowd, which shows gratitude to him for having freed the city from its misfortune.³⁶²

Eyes of Oedipus (1945) by the American abstract expressionist painter and sculptor Adolph Gottlieb (1903–1974) represents an interesting 'break' in the flood of the artistic renditions of the episode of the Sphinx.³⁶³ Resembling a pictograph, Gottlieb arranged the images, i.e., the eyes (sometimes, one single eye), in vertical tiers, almost recalling hieroglyphics. As the painting's name suggests, the whole tragedy has been metonymically reduced to a specific, essential element, with all the ambiguity that plays out in the story: the eyes. They are a metaphor for the conflict between seeing and blindness that characterizes Oedipus' search for the truth until, when he finally saw it, he blinded himself. But, given that Gottlieb approached Oedipus' myth through the reading of Freud, the 'eyes' of the hero, which he has singled out in his pictograph, recall self-punishment and also gesture, at least through the lenses of psychoanalysis, towards the major themes of incest and parricide.

A return to the iconic episode of the Sphinx occurs in the second half of the 20th century, in particular with *Edipo e la sfinge* ("Oedipus and the Sphinx", 1968) by the Italian surrealist artist Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978),³⁶⁴ and *Oedipus and the Sphinx after Ingres* (1983) by the Irish-born British painter Francis Bacon (1909–1992). De Chirico certainly distanced himself from the romantic/sensual overtone of the *fin-de-siècle* representations that have been discussed above. He in fact desexualized the relationship and portrayed Oedipus more

361 See Simonis (1972) 31. According to Tusini (2012) 246, an influence from the clinical case of Little Hans—which prompted Freud to elaborate his Oedipal theory—can be identified. On the Little Hans's case and its role in Freud's elaboration of Oedipus complex, see, in general, Bettini/Guidorizzi (2004) 33–4 with the related Freudian bibliography in n. 3.

362 See Tusini (2012) 249 with further bibliography in n. 47.

363 On Gottlieb, see e.g., Alloway/Macnaughton (1995) esp. 35–7. See, also, Tusini (2012) 249.

364 On De Chirico's *Edipo e la Sfinge*, see Tusini (2012) 247–8.

as a thinker, almost lost in melanchonic introspection. While the positioning of both figures, as well as their difference in size, recalls Ingres' painting, the drawing of Oedipus in particular is far different, as it resembles a mannequin. A more evident return to Ingres' model, as also explicitly suggested by the title, is marked by the work of Francis Bacon.³⁶⁵ In Bacon's painting, too, Ingres' influence is immediately evident in the position of the two characters, and its title would imply an acknowledgement of its great predecessor. A specific stance critical of Ingres' work should, however, not be excluded. In accordance with what can be considered Bacon's philosophy, i.e., the brutality of fact,³⁶⁶ his rendition of the episode is, in fact, brutal and crude. The very focus of the scene is on a huge foot, significantly a wounded and bleeding foot; it is the foot of an Oedipus turned into a modern muscle man, wearing a sleeveless under-shirt. The Sphinx is almost faceless, although it is possible to capture a glimpse of her female identity on her face. The emphasis given to the foot undoubtedly evokes the content of the riddle. It may also evoke the 'foot-clue'-motif, mentioned above. The foot is thus—one may think—the 'center of gravity', since it symbolizes both the content and the answer of the riddle. Given that it is Oedipus' foot, it might have replaced the play of hand-gestures characterizing Ingres' painting. The fact that it is a wounded and bleeding foot is very significant as well. As it has been observed above, the feet, wounded (i.e., swollen) because of the piercing, mark the identity of Oedipus. One may thus think that the foot here alludes to him not simply as being a representative of man, with 'man' being the solution of the riddle, but also as being precisely the man named Oedipus, i.e., the man of the aenigma. The aenigma concerned both man in general and Oedipus in particular, with reference to whom it may thus allude to the three phases of his story:³⁶⁷ his infancy, when he was exposed and injured in his feet; his adulthood, when he became king of Thebes, with his feet still being injured; and his old age, when he will travel to a foreign land, blind and using a staff to point the way ahead (Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 454–6). In the case of Oedipus, these three phases would also reflect the three basic transformations of his person: from a foundling to a king, and finally to a blind beggar. The *fil rouge* of all these three moments is his feet. Interestingly, Bacon did want to emphasize that part of Oedipus body not only by giving a close-up of the foot, but also by representing it still bleeding, so as to make it

365 My discussion of Bacon's work is mainly based on Lauriola (2011a) 173–6; see also Tusini (2012) 249–50.

366 See Sylvester (1975).

367 About this interpretation of the aenigma, which focuses on the particular symbolism of the feet as described above, see, e.g., Buller (2003) 73; Regier (2004) 78–9.

be the 'still-undiscovered' mark of Oedipus' real identity. It is as if to say, the tragedy is still to come: it lies in wait behind the door.³⁶⁸ Indeed, there is a door in the painting, and an amorphous figure, or phantasm, visible behind that door: it may symbolize destiny, Oedipus' destiny to fulfill his tragedy.³⁶⁹

In particular the episode of the Sphinx has continued to appeal to the artists' interest in the 21st century as well. Mention should be made of the Italian Stefano di Stasio's *Un altro enigma per Edipo* ("Another aenigma for Oedipus," 2006), where the artist turns the mythical encounter into an ordinary, everyday event. A return to some more traditionally crucial motifs characterizing the episode, although informed by the highly innovative and idiosyncratic features of the artist, is marked by *Oedipus at the Sphinx*, realized by the American amateur artist Michael Merck in 2008.³⁷⁰ Partially taking inspiration from Bacon's painting, the centrality of feet and legs both in the overall story of Oedipus and in the specific episode of the encounter with the Sphinx characterizes Merck's rendition of the episode. Different and original is the use that Merck has made of such an important element of the story as the feet. As observed above, the general interpretation of the episode in art, in antiquity, and in some of the modern works, is that it represents the superiority and victory of Oedipus' intelligence over savagery, which is consistent with Oedipus' 'public' reputation as claimed in the play (e.g., Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 31–6, 46–52, 390–8, 441, 502–10, 1196, 1524–5). But this interpretation has generally overshadowed an essential feature of the episode, the one that contributes to the tragedy of Oedipus' life: its irony. "It is exactly that same fortune that has ruined you" (Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 442), Tiresias in fact replies to Oedipus, who has just claimed how great he was in facing the Sphinx (Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 441). These words are emblematic of the crucial, deeper meaning of the episode of the Sphinx. As is known, the solution of the riddle led Oedipus to fulfill Apollo's oracle completely, for he was given the queen, his mother, in marriage and Thebes' throne as a reward. As a king, caring for his community's wellbeing, he then had to undertake the search for Laius' murderer. Far from inaugurating prosperity and splendor, the solving of the riddle thus marks

368 This is at least the impression I have had at first glance.

369 According to Tusini (2012) 250 with n. 51, that figure represents an Erinys who, according to the traditional mythical role of that deity, would persecute Oedipus on the ground of his murder of Laius.

370 The painting can be seen on the cover of this volume. A detailed analysis of this contemporary painting is in Lauriola (2011) esp. 177–91. Here I shall focus only on a few of the most significant details.

the beginning of Oedipus' personal tragedy, i.e., the discovery of his own real identity, which will eventually determine his ruin. To paraphrase Teiresias' words, what should have been Oedipus' greatest triumph proved to be his doom; what should have saved Thebes (the killing of the Sphinx first and, in consequence, the search for the murderer of the former king) ultimately ruined it. Surprisingly, the tragic irony crucially involved in the episode of Oedipus and the Sphinx has passed almost completely unnoticed in the related artistic renditions. Exploiting the feet-motif, Merck has found an original way to translate the irony of the episode into imagery by visualizing the English colloquialism "to shoot oneself in the foot". That indeed happened, figuratively speaking, when Oedipus encountered the Sphinx and solved the riddle: without knowing it, Oedipus 'shot himself in the foot'; his best intentions backfired.

Music

Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* enjoyed a prolific musical reception, too, through a wide range of formats: from musical stage adaptations to opera and ballet.³⁷¹ The very first musical stage adaptation, a forerunner of early opera, occurred in the Italian town of Vicenza on 3 March 1585, with a performance of *Edippo Tiranno* ("Oedipus the Tyrant") in a modern musical version, which marked the opening of the first European permanent stone theater (*Teatro Olimpico*). Based on the Italian translation of the humanist Orsatto Giustiniano, this first vernacular production³⁷² bordered on a musical version that looked forward to early opera due to the prominence of the choral voice within the dramatic structure. The music was composed by one of Italy's most eminent composers, Andrea Gabrieli. For this production, Gabrieli's music did not contemplate modern melody or counterpoint; it was the verse rhythm that prevailed, which is consistent with the main mark of tragic choruses. In contrast with other kinds of choral performances the tragic chorus would rather require a simplicity that might reflect its affinity with the rhythms of ordinary speech.³⁷³

Opera, however, has been the main strand of musical reception, whether deriving directly from Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* or from subsequent

371 With an exception been made for the performance at the *Teatro Olimpico* of Vicenza, this section will deal mainly with opera. For a concise list of musical stage adaptations spanning from the 17th to the 20th century, see Huhn/Vöhler (2010) 462.

372 The bibliography pertaining to Oedipus at Vicenza, a milestone in the production history of this play, is very vast: among the most significant contributions, see, e.g., Schrade (1960); Treu (1997) 13–28; Mazzoni (2013). For a concise overview, see Macintosh (2009) 70–3. It should be noted that there was an earlier Italian vernacular version of this play, i.e., *Edippo* by Giovanni Andrea dell'Anguillara, 1565 (on which, see above, 183–4), but it seems that it was never performed.

373 Gabrieli (1588).

European adaptations of the story. The very first opera devoted to Oedipus was composed by the German Baroque composer Johann Hugo von Wilderer (1670–1724), with an Italian libretto by Giovanni Andrea Moniglia. Entitled *Giocasta* (“Jocasta”), von Wilderer’s *drama per musica* (“play for musical adaptation”), in three acts, premiered in 1696 at the opening of the Hoftheater in Düsseldorf. It was so well received that he was subsequently appointed as vice-musical director.

The following 18th and 19th centuries did not offer a large number of operatic versions of the play. A ‘renaissance’ of this kind of renditions, however, has decisively characterized the 20th century. *L’Edipo re* (“King Oedipus”) by the Italian composer Ruggero Leoncavallo (1857–1919),³⁷⁴ with a libretto by the dramatist and stage director Giovacchino Forzano, stands out at the dawn of the century. Consisting of one act, it premiered in the United States, at the Chicago Opera, in December 1920. The plot closely follows the Sophoclean play, although—as is typical of operatic versions—it is shorter than the original, the intention being to give more space to the music rather than the words. More touching, and less informed by the king’s temper than in the original play, is the request for help addressed by Oedipus to Tiresias, while the exchange with Creon, their political debate, and the accusation of conspiracy are deemphasized. Tenderness and familial affection in Jocasta’s interventions, in Oedipus’ reaction to the news of Polybus’ death, and in the final monologue of the now-blinded Oedipus become prominent and are emphasized by the musical accompaniment. This opera seems to have been composed *ad hoc* to better exploit the singing and acting talents of the main interpreter, the baritone Titta Ruffo. Re-performed in the same year in New York, it ‘landed’ in Europe only in the ‘50s.

Perhaps the best-known operatic version of Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* is the opera-oratorio *Oedipus Rex* by one of the most influential composers of the 20th century, the Russian—then French and American—composer, conductor, and pianist Igor Fyodorovic Stravinsky (1882–1971). Consisting of two acts, it premiered as an oratorio in the Theatre Sarah Bernhardt in Paris, on 30th of May 1927, and it was conducted by Stravinsky himself. The first performance as an opera took place in Vienna one year later, precisely on the 23rd of February 1928.³⁷⁵ It was harshly received by the audience: contravening the very essence

374 The fame of this composer rests on the well-known opera *Pagliacci* (“Clowns”, 1892). Regarding his *Oedipus* opera, see Paduano (2008) 182–4.

375 My discussion of this opera is mainly based on Bauschatz (1991); MacDonald (2007) 308–10; Paduano (2008) 189–92. This opera was also first filmed in London in 1973, and later in 1992 for a production in Japan: see Sheehan (2012) 147.

of the theatrical experience, i.e., the experience of identifying oneself with the dramatic characters and their story, Stravinsky's text and staging rather establish a high degree of distance from the audience, such a distance which, in the composer's intentions, must be filled by the music, with characters who must be heard through their songs rather than their speeches.³⁷⁶ As for the text, the libretto was written by the French dramatist Jean Cocteau upon the composer's request.³⁷⁷ Having been inspired by Cocteau's adaptation of *Antigone*,³⁷⁸ Stravinsky approached the writer to ask him to write a libretto for a work based on Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. His choice fell upon this play as it contained the "universal" plot he desired,³⁷⁹ so that he might not "have to elaborate its exposition," but just to "leave the play behind," to focus on the purely musical dramatization.³⁸⁰ He thus looked for a libretto written in a language he would consider elevated but inaccessible to most people, a language that would not interfere with what he wanted to put in the spotlight, i.e., his music. As a matter of fact, Cocteau's libretto was translated into Latin by the priest Jean Daniélou, before the composer set it to music.³⁸¹ For the same purpose, i.e., to place the focus on the music as the unique 'motor' of the play, after going through several revisions, Cocteau's libretto ended up being very brief and spare. It omitted some of the original choral parts (in particular, Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 1186–92), the clash with the seer Tiresias was assimilated with the one with Creon, and the final scene of Oedipus with his daughters was replaced by a shorter scene where the hero appeared as a silent, blinded outcast, with the chorus delivering its farewell. A noteworthy addition by Cocteau, which Stravinsky did not refuse, is the character of the Speaker, the only one whose parts are in the vernacular, namely French. This character marks the transition from one scene to another, supplying, in some way, background information that might help the audience to follow the development of the story. The Speaker's six narrational-sections—or, to better say it, the Speaker's interjections which punctuate the overall flow—mostly serve to introduce a character and to drive forward the drama, sometimes replicating in

376 Bauschatz (1991) 153–4; 158.

377 For a history pertaining to Stravinsky' and Cocteau's collaboration, including the series of revisions the text underwent, see, in particular, Connon (2011).

378 See Stravinsky/Craft (1982) 22.

379 MacDonald (2007) 307 with n. 5.

380 Carr (2002) 24.

381 About Daniélou's Latin, which at times seems not to be correct, see Paduano (2008) 189 with n. 94.

advance the key phrases that would be later sung in Latin.³⁸² The distance and alienation of the audience are also caused by the particular stage setting that Stravinsky planned. His is a static representation:³⁸³ the chorus is stone-still, unless it is entering or exiting; its components are thus seated and monk-like in their stillness; they wear mask and read from scrolls. As for the characters, they only move their arms and heads. This performative peculiarity rests upon the way in which Stravinsky saw Oedipus, i.e., more as a tragic victim than as a tragic hero. He in fact remarked, “the portrait of the individual as the victim of circumstances is made far more starkly effective by this static representation.”³⁸⁴

Although it did not enjoy much success at its time, Stravinsky’s operatorio *Oedipus Rex* remains a milestone in the musical reception history of this Sophoclean play, as most of the subsequent operas based on *Oedipus the King* are not as well known as this one. Such is the case of the Romanian composer George (or, Georges) Enescu (1881–1955), a contemporary of Stravinsky whose *Oedipe* premiered at the Opéra de Paris on 10 March 1936, with a libretto by the French Jewish writer, Edmond Fleg.³⁸⁵ Classified as “the only significant and illuminating response to Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*,”³⁸⁶ it returns to Oedipus that distinctly heroic status which Stravinsky’s Oedipus had lost in his metamorphosis into a mere pawn of unseen forces. Inspired by a performance of Sophocles’ play at the Comédie-Française in Paris, in 1910,³⁸⁷ Enescu started out to capture the image of Oedipus’ self-blinding in music by elaborating sketches for an opera that would be completed after more than a decade, and would draw its inspiration from both Oedipus plays, i.e. *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus*.

Sometimes between 1910 and 1912 Enescu was introduced to Fleg, whose interpretation of the story matched exactly that of the composer, as both believed that a modern opera about Oedipus should include the entire story of the Theban king, thus allowing the audience to see Oedipus not only at the moment of his tragic demise, but also in his final protestations of innocence and triumph as he approached his apotheosis. Fleg’s libretto underwent several revisions over an entire decade.³⁸⁸ In its final version it

382 A few examples of this are in Paduano (2008) 190.

383 About this, see, e.g., Walsh (1993) 17; Sheehan (2012) 148.

384 Stravinsky/Craft (1982) 24.

385 About this opera, the collaboration between Enescu and Fleg, and the interplay of music and libretto, see Buller (2003); Ewans (2007) 105–28; Paduano (2008) 184–9. My discussion is mainly drawn from these sources. Quotations of the French text are from Buller (2003).

386 Ewans (2007) 106.

387 Details and anecdotes about this event are in Buller (2003) 67 with n. 8.

388 For a concise history of the composition and revision process, see Buller (2003) 67–8.

consists of six scenes distributed among four acts. Act 1 constitutes the prologue, with the story of Oedipus' birth, Tiresias' prophecy that he is doomed to kill his father and marry the mother, and Laius' surrendering of the infant to a shepherd to be exposed on the Cithaeron. Act 2 presents Oedipus' departure from Corinth after he heard an oracle describing his destiny, his murder of Laius in a fit of rage at a crossroads, his triumph over the Sphinx, and his subsequent transformation into a hero and a king to the Thebans. Act 3 follows closely the plotline and events of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, and the last one, Act 4, constitutes an epilogue by reducing the entire tragedy *Oedipus at Colonus* to one single scene.

Fleg was quite conservative in his adaptation of the story for his libretto. Respecting the demand of Enescu, he reduced, or rather omitted, the more shocking references to the incest theme, as the audience would already know the basics of the story and would thus not need to be reminded of that shocking event. Besides this, among the few, and slight alterations, one may mention that Polybus does not die here, but sends a messenger to Thebes merely to convey his wish, and that of Merope, that Oedipus might return to them. A greater alteration pertains to the story of this messenger, according to which he replaced the real son of Polybus and Merope, who had died while he was in his care, with Oedipus; as a consequence, the royal couple of Corinth truly believed that Oedipus was their son. Significantly, as it conveys the interpretation of Oedipus' story by the composer and librettist, the riddle of the Sphinx is completely altered, which actually constitutes the real innovation of this adaptation. Supporting the view of Oedipus as a modern hero who masters his own destiny, the riddle of the Sphinx is accordingly transformed into a question which, while it is related to that new view of the hero, does not pose a real challenge, as the answer could almost be taken for granted. *Nomme quelqu'un ou nomme quelque chose, qui soit plus grand que le Destin!* ("Name someone or name something that is greater than Destiny"), is the new riddle. The answer remains the same, as Oedipus confidently replies: *L'homme! L'homme! / L'homme est plus fort que le Destin!* ("Man! Man! Man only is more powerful than Destiny!"). This extreme change is further emphasized by the striking scoring of this specific scene, which indicates that both Fleg and Enescu had considered this episode as the very core of their opera, as a central theme of their *Oedipe*, for it conveys the particular view that both took toward the relationship between man and destiny. Not accidentally the word *destin* appears rather frequently throughout the libretto,³⁸⁹ working as a verbal equivalent to the musical leitmotifs surrounding the major

389 For an overview of the occurrences of the word in some key moments, see Buller (2003) 75–6.

characters' of the opera. The thematic center of this opera is not Oedipus' crimes; it is rather his redemptive qualities, his heroic, near-divine nature that ultimately made him victorious over the power of destiny that would destroy him. Significantly, insistent are Oedipus' protestations of innocence, which, to Enescu and Fleg, are what would lead Oedipus to his ultimate victory: the belief that humankind is immune to forces greater than itself, and that resistance to overpowering oppression is heroic in and of itself. In light of the historical context in which the two worked on *Oedipe*—Fleg in the immediate aftermath of the First World War, and Enescu when the Soviets were crushing the Ukrainian nationalists while the fascist dictatorship was prevailing in Romania—Oedipus became for them the most active classical hero, as his will and belief in his innocence remained unbreakable even in front of successive blows.

As for the musical aspects,³⁹⁰ Enescu turned to be highly innovative. He composed this opera with a rich combination of tonal and atonal style, seeking to give one of the central scenes in the opera, i.e., the encounter with Sphinx, a dreamlike quality that would be able "to express the awakening of the Sphinx, in a hazy twilight, to the sounds of the distant music of nightmares."³⁹¹ By contrast, other scenes are more harmonic and shaped in a more Romantic style. This mode of composition informs, for instance, the scene of the joyful celebration of the hero's birth in Act 1, and the triumphal response to the liberation of Thebes from the Sphinx. Musical leitmotifs are also consistently used throughout the opera, providing it a sense of unity as they connect later scenes and images to earlier ones, which helps establish a degree of melodic structure in an opera that has been composed almost entirely without arias.

Some noteworthy operatic renditions occur in the second half of the 20th century as well. Among several, a mention should be first reserved for *Oedipus der Tyrann* ("Oedipus the Tyrant") by the German composer Carl Orff (1885–1982), which premiered in 1959 at the Württembergisches Staatstheater in Stuttgart. His is a *Literatur-oper*,³⁹² i.e., a mainly literary work that translated into music the renowned verse translations of Sophocles' play by the German Romantic poet and philosopher Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843). Orff spent about seven years to complete his opera. His Oedipus is an intellectual hero seeking for the truth, which he proves to be able to discover through a rigorous logical process; but, in succeeding in his intellectual journey, he ruins himself by growing bold:

390 A concise, yet detailed, analysis attentive to the musical technicalities is in Buller (2003) 68–73.

391 Gavory (1955) 145.

392 See Paduano (2008) 183; Huhn/Vöhler (2010) 462.

hybris is his very guilt. Musically Orff experiments with different possibilities of melodic and non-melodic chant.

In the operatic versions of the last decades of the 20th century, certainly in accordance with the rising of feminist movements, *Le nom d'Oedipe: chant du corps interdit* ("The Name of Oedipus: Song of the Forbidden Body") by a major French feminist theorist and writer, Hélène Cixous, stands out.³⁹³ Composed in free verse as lyrics for the homonymous opera by the French composer André Boucourechliev, it premiered at the Avignon theater festival in 1978. It is a feminist reinterpretation of Sophocles' play that makes Jocasta the central character, in the footsteps of Martha Graham's dance *Night Journey* (1947).³⁹⁴ The story is told by Jocasta in the last few days of her life, when she re-lives her experiences both with Oedipus and in her childhood. Her song is a long lament for the loss of the forbidden body that she enjoyed in the pre-Oedipal state that she had shared with her son. Boucourechliev/Cixous conceived the opera as a post-Freudian, Kleinian pièce, as it celebrates the pre-Oedipal state in which incest is not a taboo and can be enjoyed without the taint of shame.³⁹⁵ There is in fact no sense of horror at the incest taboo, despite the expression 'forbidden body' characterizing the subtitle of this opera. Jocasta claims to have been aware of the true identity of Oedipus from the first moment, but chooses to ignore it; she claims that the close identity between the two was beneficial to their union, and her song is also a celebration of that earlier union. Refusing the demands of patriarchal conventions (including incest and parricide), this unconditionally loving Jocasta implores Oedipus to forget the world outside their love with its 'rules', and to remain in a primal night/womb world where there are no boundaries between self and other, the two become one, and familial identities (mother, father, child) break down. The double/bipartite identities of Jocasta and Oedipus, which Jocasta wishes to overcome, as well as their bipartite world (inside and outside their love, private and public) are mirrored by the bipartite title, while the respective psychological splitting was made visual through the adoption of two Oedipus(es) and two Jocasta(s). One Oedipus, played in calm baritone and wearing a red mantle, represented the dignified public figure which corresponds to the Sophoclean king Oedipus until the moment he discovered that he was unwittingly a regicide. The other Oedipus, dressing a linen suit, represents the later Oedipus, who is also discovered to be a parricide. But it is the two Jocasta(s) that dominate the stage: one

393 About this work, see Freeman (1998); Foley (2004) 86–7; Macintosh (2009) 184–7; Sheehan (2012) 149–50.

394 On which see below, 270–1.

395 About Klein, see above, n. 207.

sings the 'song of the forbidden body', significantly wearing a wedding dress; the other articulates the same song in heightened verse, lamenting the loss of that forbidden body, the loss of the past.

What was it that determined the breakdown of the mother-son relationship, the union and unity they once had reached? It was not Oedipus' self-discovery, like in Sophocles; it was rather his discovery of his public self, his being the king of Thebes, *La Ville* ("the city"), which is presented as a demanding female lover who took him away from Jocasta and that primal night/womb world in which Jocasta wanted Oedipus to remain. Under the pressure of the city's demands and the allure of fame, Oedipus withdraws into guilt and silence. The interference of *La Ville*, i.e., the plague-stricken town that lures Oedipus away from Jocasta, is represented first metaphorically, as Oedipus sits onstage and deprives Jocasta of his life-sustaining gaze; then literally, when his departure from the stage leads to Jocasta's physical collapse. Lying on her bed and hearing only silence, Jocasta turns to the wall herself and die. She dies in the company of an androgynous Tiresias, mother and father here, who sings a song that Jocasta's mother used to sing to lull her to sleep.

Cixou's opera had only three performances at Avignon, yet it attracted remarkable attention. After almost two decades, in 1998, it has been reworked in English as a dance-operatic pièce, under the title *Jokasta*. It was performed in New York by the all-female company 'Voice and Vision', with considerable success.³⁹⁶

In the 1980s, *Ödipus* by Wolfgang Rihm, one of Europe's leading composers, certainly represents one of the major operas devoted to the Theban hero. First performed in 1987 in Berlin, in this operatic adaptation Rihm replaces the linear narrative with a peculiar montage of Sophocles' play by using Hölderlin's German translation, Heiner Müller's *Ödipuskommentar* ("Oedipus commentary," 1987), and Friedrich Nietzsche's *Ödipus: Reden des letzten Philosophen mit sich selbst* ("Oedipus: Dialogue of the last Philosopher with himself"). The effect of the whole partly rests upon the visuals differentiation between the dramatic sections based on the Sophocles' play and the commentary and monologues based on the other two sources. The musical accompaniment mainly depends on percussion and wind instruments, while strings are used only at the moment of Oedipus' self-blinding on stage. At this point the music conveying the hero's irony is played by two solo violins.

Still in the 1980s, precisely in June 1988, the operatic version of Steven Berkoff's *Greek*³⁹⁷ by the prolific English composer Mark-Anthony Turnage

396 See Tommasini (1998).

397 About Berkoff's *Greek*, see above, 232–3. On its musical adaptation, see, in particular, Evans (2007) 183–200.

(1960) was welcomed with a standing ovation when it premiered at the first Munich Biennale, where it won the prizes for best opera and best libretto (adapted by Turnage himself in collaboration with Jonathan Moore). A triumphant revival occurred at the Edinburgh Festival in the same year, and few years later, in 1990, it was filmed by the BBC.³⁹⁸ Resting upon a performance by an orchestra with seventeen players (with no violins), this opera displays a wide spectrum of musical influences, including rock and jazz.

In the very last decades of the 20th century the basic story of the ancient king who killed his father, married his mother and blinded himself, upon the discovery of the truth, became so familiar that composers felt free to downplay it through parodic rendition: such is the case, for instance, with *Oedipus Tex and Other Calamities* by the American composer, musician, and satirist, Peter Schickele, working under the pseudonym P. D. Q. Bach.³⁹⁹ Released in 1990, it is described by the author as “the dramatic oratorio that demonstrates that the only two sure things in life are death and Texas.”⁴⁰⁰ Deconstructing Sophocles’ tragedy with humor, Schickele’s work turns the Greek hero into a cowboy who introduces himself by recounting, and boasting of, both his recent triumph over a man who told him to step aside in a gulch, and his quick solution to the Bigfoot’s riddle. A romantic duet with the queen of the rodeo, Billie Jo Casta, follows, which in turn is followed at once by a plague and the revelations of a shepherdess about Oedipus Tex’s real origin. There is the suicide of the queen and the self-blinding of the cowboy, although the latter then regrets his choice. The piece opens and closes in oratorio style: the opening features a repeated invocation of ‘tragedy’ and the prediction of the sufferings of Oedipus “before he knows the reason why”; the end conveys the statement of the moral of the story, which is a hilarious one: “Don’t love your mother [...], save it for your horse. I guarantee you will be filled with great remorse if you give your mom the love you should be saving for your horse.”

Musicals and dance-dramas constitute another ‘avenue’ for musical adaptations of Greek Dramas, *Oedipus the King* included, above all in the 20th and

398 See Brown (2004) 300–1.

399 A well-known parodic/humorous musical rendition appears already in the 1950s, with the song *Oedipus Rex* by the American mathematician, musical satirist and songwriter Peter Leher. The lyrics of this song, as well as its performance, can be easily found online, through google.com.

400 The quotation is from the official website of the artist: <http://www.schickele.com/shoppe/pdqrec/tex.htm>. For a concise description, see Foley (2012) 188, from which the quotations above are also taken.

21st centuries. An interesting case of this kind is represented by *The Sorrow of Oedipus* (1935), a lyrical adaptation of Sophocles' play in the form of a one-act musical, by the librarian and founder of the Yiddish Theatre Companies, Mendl Elkin.⁴⁰¹ Jewish playwrights and directors began to introduce plots, motifs, and character from ancient Greek dramas onto the modern Yiddish stage starting from the first decades of the 20th century. Seeking to make ancient tragedy relevant to their Yiddish-speaking audiences, and thus reconfiguring the ancient texts in a way that they could reflect Jewish norms and values, these writers and directors have been struggling to temper the challenge that including Greek materials posed to the Jewish tradition by adding a variety of biblically derived elements, and accordingly replacing some Greek components that were unacceptable to them, such as the Greek polytheistic theology. As expected, a "Judaization of Greek mythology"⁴⁰² is the result of this process of adaptation, such a 'Judaization' that is nowhere more apparent than in the adaptations of tragedies where the maternal protagonist features prominently. For this kind of figure the revision is usually substantial, as playwrights, translators, and directors intend to align the sometimes-ambiguous Greek maternal characters with the archetype of the overly devoted 'Yiddish mother' of the Jewish stage tradition. It stands to reason that Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* has posed a peculiar challenge to Yiddish authors, as Jocasta's relationship with her son violated all the family norms for audiences, actors, and directors who were accustomed to the sacred mother-figure of Jewish literature.⁴⁰³

Elkin was the first who dared to place Oedipus on the Yiddish stage. Although much of his *The Sorrow of Oedipus* consists of a line-by-line literal translation from Sophocles, Elkin never defined it as a translation, but rather as an adaptation of the Sophoclean theme of Oedipus.⁴⁰⁴ In turning the original play into a one-act musical and trying to create a Jewish Oedipal tragedy, Elkin made significant changes. As far as thematic/content-changes are concerned, for instance, he replaced the capricious gods of the Greek pantheon with an omniscient Apollo, an Apollo very similar to the God of Jewish sacred texts and liturgy. He also eliminated the oracles by replacing them with

401 On this work, see, in particular, Caplan (2010–2011) esp. 405–6; 416–22.

402 Caplan (2010–2011) 405 with n. 1.

403 There is a joke, reported by Caplan (2010–2011) 416 with n. 22, that testifies to the centrality, and 'sacrality', that Jewish culture traditionally grants to the mother-figure and the mother-son relationship; it is a joke that reflects a misinterpretation of the Oedipus story which has thus in turn become a common trope in Jewish comedy. In this joke a certain Mrs. Goldstein is told by the psychologist who has seen her son that he had an Oedipus complex. To this, unperturbed, Mrs. Goldstein replied, "Oedipus, shmedipus—just as long as he loves his mother!"

404 Caplan (2010–2011) 422 n. 25.

prophets and turned Oedipus' journey to Delphi into a mysterious pilgrimage in search of God. But the changes pertaining to Jocasta are more radical, in terms both of theme and of performative format. Her appearance on the stage is prefigured by an added scene that worked as a warning of Jocasta's inescapable fate. This additional scene aligns with the musical features of Elkin's adaptation, as it is performed by a madwoman who, singing of grief for her lost child in front of Oedipus, dances a wild *danse macabre*, a *toynt-tans*, i.e. a Yiddish death-dance—as the stage directions read—which lasts several minutes. After the dance, the madwoman leaves and Jocasta collides with her at the entrance. The *toynt-tans*, which in Yiddish tradition accompanies situations that can end only in death, is the musical leitmotif of this adaptation. In the added scene, it works as a clear foreshadowing of Jocasta's doom before even her first appearance. She is a mother stained by a relationship with her son that contravenes not only the biblical prohibition against incest, but also the Yiddish melodrama's idea that a mother cannot love her son 'too much'. For Jewish audiences, Jocasta would be an unacceptable excess of motherly devotion. Consequently, the dancing of the grieving madwoman works as a literary, and acceptable, double of Jocasta: not only does she represent Jocasta's fate, but also—and more importantly—she symbolizes a familiar image, that of the Jewish mother completely dedicated to her children, whether dead or alive. Having Jocasta ignore the warnings of the madwoman is Elkin's device to rewrite Jocasta's story without utterly challenging the Jewish motherly archetype. Jocasta herself performs a wild dance, a dance of supplication, together with her maidservants, in another added scene—or, more precisely, in a scene that is an elongated version of the Sophoclean corresponding one: the Sophoclean opening scene of the third episode, where Jocasta places a suppliant's branch on the altar of Apollo and asks help for Oedipus, who is now troubled by doubts (ll. 911–23), becomes a prayer to Zeus within a wild dance ending with Jocasta's collapse to the floor in religious ecstasy. At this point, unaware of her presence on the stage, Creon's entrance with the Corinthian messenger (another change from the original counterpart-scene) leads Jocasta to learn the truth. At first neglectful of the madwoman's foreshadowing dance, Jocasta now echoes her *danse macabre* in a frenzy of religious exultation, which soon becomes a *toynt-tans* signifying her inevitable death. Overcome with remorse, this Jocasta too flees into the palace and commits suicide.

A completely different musical, classifiable as a 'Musical Dark Comedy',⁴⁰⁵ is *Oedipus for Kids*, with music by Robert J. Saferstein and Gil Varod, first performed

405 The information is from the publisher Samuel French, Inc. (Make Theatre Happen)'s website: <http://www.samuel french.com/p/502/oedipus-for-kids>. The printed manuscript/

in 2006⁴⁰⁶ by a three-persons troupe (the Fuzzy Duck Theatre Company) dedicated to performing classics for children. Despite their ‘mission’ and the title of this musical, *Oedipus for Kids* is not really for kids.⁴⁰⁷ Lasting about two hours, it has been described as “A spoof of children’s theater, with some truly funny songs and endearingly loopy performance from a cast of just three”, as “Catchy and Funny!”, and as “Funny, well-crafted, and with a charming score”.⁴⁰⁸

Finally mention should be made of the 2006 Balinese dance-drama *Raja Edepus* (“King Oedipus”), created for live performance at the Bali Arts Festival, directed and produced by the Canadian writer William Maranda, and now available to a wider public through two DVDs.⁴⁰⁹ Impressed by some similarities that he saw between the contemporary Balinese theater and the ancient Greek one, Maranda has accordingly tried to fuse musical and dramatic techniques from the contemporary Balinese theater with those thought to have been used in the ancient Greek theater, such as the use of masks. A major Balinese influence pertains to the musical aspect, as the cluster of Sophocles’ speaking roles is enriched by a large *Kecak* ensemble and a dynamic *Gamelan* accompaniment.⁴¹⁰ Both are used meaningfully to great dramatic effect. *Kecak* performers, in particular, cover a variety of important dramatic functions. They indeed supplement and support the Greek chorus, and mark the dramatic tempo of the production by producing, along with the *Gamelan*, an almost continuous music that alerts the audience to the degree of dramatic intensity characterizing any character’s speech. The tempo ranges from calm and slow to highly agitated and quick, as the action comes closer to the tragic end, eventually turning into a frenzy at the conclusion, when Edepus realizes the truth. Perhaps, the most important dramatic function that the *Kecak* performers fulfill consists of acting like a physical human stream, as they drive the main actors offstage and place them again on the stage into new positions. They thus move the action forward both literally and figuratively. By interacting with the actors in this way, at the sound of their rhythmic chanting the *Kecak* performers seem to

book (2009) is by Gild Varol and Kimberley Patterson; its frontispiece adds a subtitle which reads “A new musical gone horribly, horribly wrong.”

406 Foley (2012) 274.

407 In the Samuel French, Inc.’s website (see above, n. 405), under the entry ‘cautions’, we in fact read “Strong Language, Mild Adult Theme,” and under the entry ‘Target Audience’ we read: “Adult, Senior, Teen (Age 14–18)”.

408 The quotations are selected pieces of the short reviews available on the website mentioned above in n. 405.

409 See Paul (2011); my discussion is mainly based on this source.

410 Both *Kecak* and *Gamelan* refer to a specific kind of music and dance of Java and Bali, in Indonesia, with percussion instruments being predominant.

embody, and to physically manifest, a force stronger than humanity, a force that for both world-views (the Balinese and the ancient Greek one) is known as 'destiny'. Evidently, as is typical for most Balinese dance genres, the ensembles of Balinese dancers and musicians do not simply provide background sound-scape to *Raja Edepus*, but they visibly take part in scenes with the characters derived from Sophocles, thus becoming part of the dramatized narrative.

Dance

Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* could certainly not pass unnoticed by the renowned American dancer, choreographer and innovator of modern dance, Martha Graham (1894–1991). Since her choreographic debut, she in fact engaged with the heritage of ancient Greek culture by turning myth into dance.⁴¹¹ Choosing ancient myths as a raw material to excavate image of women with their hopes and struggles, i.e., to explore 'herstory', and to represent it in the new art form of theatrical dance, Graham's choreographies show a clear shift from the traditional male perspective encoded in classical myths to the female perspective, the one which informs the narratives of her dances. This means that the woman of each selected myth is the central, if not exclusive, protagonist. This applies to the dance based on Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* as well, where Jocasta is the focus, while Oedipus becomes 'marginal'.

Entitled *Night Journey*, this 28-minute dance premiered in May of 1947 at The Cambridge High and Latin School, in Cambridge, Massachusetts.⁴¹² Graham's shift to the female viewpoint has affected the composition and organization of the plot in such a way that the private space of the home—the one reserved for ancient women—replaces the socio-political and military context of the action in Greek Tragedy and becomes a space for the exploration and expression of the female psyche, the woman's inner feelings and emotions, as well as her interaction with her role as mother and wife. In *Night Journey*, in fact, Graham placed the events in Jocasta's bedchamber, which is symbolized by a bed situated at the center-back of the stage. This bed delimits both the dance space and its scenic focus; there are no traces of the entrance of the palace. It is Jocasta who first appears and starts dancing on the stage, and the dance

411 From 1928 to 1987 (a few years before her death) Graham created and performed about 24 choreographies inspired by classical myth. For a list and basic information of all of them, see Yaari (2003) 221–3 with nn. 3–20. Yaari also provides a full discussion of the main 17 choreographies produced from the '40s on (at pp. 224–42), including the one based on the Sophoclean play under discussion. My analysis draws on this work (esp. pp. 226–7; 232; 238–9); see, also, Foley (2004) 85; Macintosh (2009) 181–4.

412 There is also a video version of this dance, released in 1976: for a detail information, see Yaari (2003) 223 n. 11.

begins from 'her end', i.e., from Jocasta's suicide, as she moves with a hangman's noose around her neck. The incestuous love between Jocasta and her son is represented, through Jocasta's eyes, in the form of a dream-like flashback, as she (and we with her) dreams and journeys back to the beginning, i.e., to the triumphant arrival of Oedipus, whom an all-female Chorus carrying laurel leaves conducts to her for their first meeting. From that moment on the dance consists of a series of stage images that present the events as a re-enactment of the incestuous love and subsequent disaster. The love duet of the two protagonists culminates in a 'tableau': Jocasta and Oedipus become entangled in the rope that Jocasta had around her neck in the opening scene, and that she threw to the ground when she started her 'dream-like journey' back to the moment in which Oedipus had re-entered her life. According to Graham's intention, that rope would symbolize both the love connecting the two as wife and husband, and the umbilical cord binding the two as mother and son. At that moment, Tiresias, who represents blind fate, enters and leaps across the stage; when he touches the rope with his staff, wife/mother and husband/son collapse to the ground. The truth has been revealed: both are filled with remorse and begin to twist about. Then Jocasta falls on the bed, while Oedipus throws the rope to the ground, rushes to the bed, takes the brooch from Jocasta's dress and blinds himself. His punishment, which happens before Jocasta's suicide like in Seneca, is here linked only to the discovery of the incestuous marriage.

In order to focus on Jocasta and her relationship with Oedipus, Graham had to make significant changes: there are no references, for instance, to the Sphinx, to Laius' murder, to the plague, or to Oedipus' self-discovery journey. After Oedipus blinds himself, the Chorus leads him away in horror. Now alone, Jocasta rises from the bed and takes the rope; after removing her royal cloak, she hangs herself. The last appearance on the stage is reserved for Tiresias as the symbol of inescapable destiny.⁴¹³

On Stage and Screen

Stage

It is tempting to start with a *praeteritio* by claiming that there should be no need to say that the performance history of the reception of a tragedy like *Oedipus the King* is extremely wide and thus difficult to manage. Despite the inevitably narrow principle of selection applied to it, the large section that I devoted to the reception of this play in literature—which obviously includes most

413 For a concise list of other ballets, see Huhn/Vöhler (201) 462.

of the major theatrical pieces that re-elaborated, and/or built on, the story of Sophocles' Oedipus—⁴¹⁴ might already work as an indicator of this predicament. The production database of the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD hereafter)⁴¹⁵ offers a clearer picture, as it lists 496 entries under (Sophocles') *Oedipus the King*, of which about 396 refer to a stage-play.⁴¹⁶ Another 57 entries are listed under the generic Italian/Spanish title *Edipo*, of which 48 refer specifically to *Oedipus the King*.

Since the very first staging in the Modern Era of *Edipo Tiranno* ("Oedipus the Tyrant") at the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza (Italy) in 1585,⁴¹⁷ Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* has been performed all over the world, first mainly in Europe (especially in England, since 1679),⁴¹⁸ and then, particularly in the 20th century, in the United States, where College/University productions have so far been the prevailing venue. 'Exotic' countries, too, have been playing some role in the widely diffused flow of performances of this Sophoclean tragedy and its adaptations, from Japan to South Africa, from China to Australia and New Zealand.⁴¹⁹

414 The peculiarity of the performative features of an adaptation as well as the availability of sources specifically describing and assessing the performance of a given adaptation have been the main criteria I used to distribute the material between the two most potentially overlapping sections, i.e., 'Literature' and 'Stage'.

415 Founded by Edith Hall and Oliver Taplin in 1996, the APGRD is an Oxford research project aiming at establishing an international history of ancient drama in performance. Detailed information is available at the APGRD website: <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/>.

416 The production database is available at <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/research-collections/performance-database/productions>. It is meant to collect data for performances that took place between 1450 and 2020. It provides different tools for the search. 496 is the result that I obtained by entering the 'Ancient Authors' and 'Ancient Works' boxes without specifying further options, such as 'Venues', 'Places', 'Festivals', and 'Production Medium'. 396 is the result that I obtained when specifying the 'Production Medium' (i.e., entering 'stage-play'). For both kinds of search (with and without specifying the production medium), I also opted for 'Only productions with item archive'. It should be noted that without the latter option, the overall entries under Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* come to 911. In the following notes some productions are referenced with their ID number from the APGRD database. All the data I am referring to are from the website mentioned above, accessed on November 2016.

417 See above, 258.

418 ID 746.

419 They are mostly College/University performances that have been taking place in the 20th and, even more, 21st centuries; see, e.g., ID 4553, ID 9668 (New Zealand); ID 8904, 8907, 2195, 8910, 8952, 8955, 8965, 2206, 8969, 1154, 3080, 9021, 9030, 9031, 9035, 9039, 9041, 3082, 9045, 9411, 9391, 9410, 9437, 9443 (Japan); 5716, 6065, 4856, 7930 (Australia); 7832 (China), and so forth.

This overall scenario, along with the limited space available for this section, obviously dictates a selection. With an exception for some first productions in modern times that constitute a landmark in the reception history of the stage adaptation of *Oedipus the King*, and thus deserve a proper mention in a chronological sequence, an articulation *per* themes and trends, a special attention to peculiar performance features and geographic distribution, and a focus on the last two centuries appear to constitute adequate criteria for a selective, yet fairly representative, discussion.⁴²⁰

As *Edipo Tiranno* ("Oedipus the Tyrant") was significantly chosen to inaugurate the first European permanent stone theater, the *Teatro Olimpico* in Vicenza, in Renaissance Italy, precisely in 1585, the same Sophoclean play was likewise significantly chosen at the dawn of the 20th century to inaugurate the opening of the first national theatre of Ireland, the Abbey Theatre in Dublin (1904), by one of its founders, William Butler Yeats, the difference being that Yeats had to delay that production, since the translators he had approached came with nothing by the time he needed to have the play ready.⁴²¹ While in Italy the choice was mainly an aesthetic one, dictated by the 'reverence' paid to Aristotelian dramatic theory,⁴²² in Ireland it was a *quasi*-political choice, as Yeats wanted to produce *Oedipus* at a time when it was banned from the public stage in England, since about 1880, by the Lord Chamberlain's Office. The theme of incest had been considered an unacceptable topic for the English audience, and the ban remained in force until 1912.⁴²³ Exploiting the fact that there was no theatre censorship in Ireland, Yeats wanted a Dublin production of this Sophoclean play, in 1904, that would enable the Abbey Theatre to stand as a champion of intellectual freedom, and would thus denounce the philistinism—and 'tyranny'—of the British Establishment ruling his country. But, as said, he was able to produce a *King Oedipus* on the Abbey stage only later, in 1926, after he himself had worked on his own version, relying mainly on Sir Richard Jebb's translation (1887).

420 Beside the rich production database provided by the APGRD, a useful resources for a production history of this play, although confined to the American stage, is the Appendix D, 'Professional Productions and New Versions of *Oedipus Tyrannus*' provided by Foley (2012) 265–76, spanning from 1834 to 2012.

421 About the intention of Yeats to write and produce an Oedipus play, see, in general, Arkins (2005) esp. 156–8; Sheenan (2012) 138–40. More detailed information is in Yeats/Clark/McGuire (1989). Among the first translators that Yeats contacted, there was Gilbert Murray, whose translation of this Sophoclean play appeared in 1911: see, e.g., Sheenan (2012) 137. On Yeats' *Oedipus*, see also Macintosh (2008).

422 See, e.g., Macintosh (2009) 70.

423 On this ban, see, e.g., Sova (2004) 191–2.

Yeats' version happens to be one of the more poetic adaptations of this Sophoclean play.⁴²⁴ He preserved the core of the original plot, altering mainly the tone of the conclusion: by cutting about 82 lines at the end, Yeats made Oedipus indulge in less self-pity than the original character, thus turning him more into a like-a-Yeatsian swordsman. From a performative point of view, in its première at the Abbey Theatre in 1926 as well as in some of the following productions, the chorus, according to Yeats' stage directions, has been placed in the orchestral pit, with only the choral leader appearing on stage throughout the play.

It was a great success, and, like the Teatro Olimpico *Edipo Tiranno*, Yeats' Abbey *King Oedipus* remained very influential, as it enjoyed a number of stage productions in Ireland and Europe as well as 'overseas'. Mention should also be made of the 1946 production at London's Old Vic, with the performance of the legendary British actor Laurence Olivier (1907–1989); the 1955 Tyrone Guthrie production in Canada (Ontario), which was also filmed and released as *Oedipus Rex* in 1957;⁴²⁵ the 1973 Michael Cacoyannis production at the Abbey in Dublin; and the 1987 Druid Theatre Company production, also in Ireland (Galway).⁴²⁶ More recently, given that it was planned in 2000, Yeats' version was chosen for a stage production at the Actors Studio in New York, with the famous actor Al Pacino playing the role of Oedipus. But it never came to fruition.⁴²⁷

Many productions of Greek drama that had originated from Europe (England, in particular) quickly grew roots in America since the mid-19th century,⁴²⁸ reaching a significant record in the 20th century. Out of the 119 productions on the American stage from 1834 to 2015, 82 occurred in fact in the last century.⁴²⁹ Yeats' *Oedipus Rex* exerted a significant influence in its early U.S. performances: it was first performed at Boston's Symphony Hall in 1930, and in

424 See, e.g., Grab (1972).

425 An accurate analysis of Guthrie's production is in Macintosh (2009) 163–6; about his cinematic version, see below, 291.

426 On this production, see, e.g., Arkins (1988).

427 Sheenan (2012) 154 n. 38.

428 According to Davis (2008), conventionally the American production history of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* is said to start with the unsuccessful New York performance of 1882; Davis, on the contrary, argues that earlier, in 1834, the Bowery Theatre (a rallying point for pro-American, anti-foreign working class audiences, established in Manhattan) featured an *Oedipus*, or *The Riddle of the Sphinx*, which might be the very first American-authored adaptation of a Greek Drama. On this adaptation, along with Davis (2008), see Foley (2012) 4–31.

429 The data are based on my search in the APGRD production database, on which see above, nn. 415, 416.

particular its London Old Vic's version with Laurence Olivier had an enormous impact when it was put on stage at New York's Century Theatre, in May, 1946.⁴³⁰ Yeats' theatrical legacy might account for a certain emphasis on ritual and on Oedipus' role as scapegoat, which characterized most of the American stage adaptations in the 1970s and 1980s, when the play became a tool for exploring human origins and human nature.⁴³¹ Such is the case, for instance, in the 1972 production of *Oedipus the King* by the British director Michael Langham at the Guthrie Theater (Minneapolis), one of the most important professional theaters in the United States, which has been playing a distinctive role in staging Greek Drama by providing new translations/adaptations, new choreography, and music designed specifically for its productions.

As the first in a series of productions that stressed mystical traditions from many ancient and primitive cultures, rituals, and human origins, the 1972 Guthrie Theater *Oedipus the King* (revived in 1973)⁴³² was designed to represent "man at the crossroads of his development."⁴³³ The universal feature of this production's focus, i.e., man, his origin and his nature,⁴³⁴ accounted for the composite of music, vocal sounds, and costumes. The music, which accompanied the choral sections and some parts of the spoken scenes, was in fact played on a mix of assorted instruments, including a Chinese plate cymbal and Buddhist bowls; the vocal drones were likewise borrowed from diverse chants—Pygmy, Coptic, Greek, and Tibetan; and the costumes evoked a mix of Egyptian, Byzantine, and Greek garments. Several additions to the script, which followed Sophocles very closely, contributed to emphasizing the ritual fabric of this stage adaptation. In the opening scene, for instance, a scream is heard, and a priest with his hand plunged into the body of child is seen: presumably the child is to be sacrifice to avert the plague, and the priest drew out his heart. This image also suggested birth—both the fraught birth of Oedipus and, more generally, the birth of human beings. Significantly, the scream accompanying this image is echoed by Oedipus at the end, at the moment of the discovery of his real 'birth', i.e., of his identity. Likewise significantly, the riddle of the Sphinx, which—as is known—is about human identity, framed the play. These and similar, interesting variations are only appropriate for a performance meant to be a vehicle to delve into, and to

430 See Foley (2012) 164–5.

431 Foley (2012) 162.

432 On Guthrie's production, see also above, 274.

433 See Foley (2012) 164 with n. 4.

434 About this 'universality' concern, Foley (2012) 165 highlights that the publicity of the 1972 Guthrie Theater production claimed that this play presents "the biography of all men and this production aims to serve that end."

confront, the essential mysteries of human life, i.e., the mysteries of birth, identity, knowledge, and death. To succeed in this exploration, a sacrifice is required: here Oedipus in fact embodied the successful scapegoat that the Sophoclean original defers.

While the American stage adaptations of Sophocles' play in the 1970s and 1980s testify to a preference for a 'ritualizing' trend, in the following decade, an interest in creating new trilogies or other pairings from the original Greek tragedies emerges more strongly, and not only on the American stage.⁴³⁵ Such a trend has already been observed in the literary reception of *Oedipus the King*. The combination is mainly confined to Sophocles' Theban tragedies themselves, linked with each other to address issues that an American stage adaptation of *Oedipus the King* itself might have often found difficult to confront, issues such as leadership, family-*versus*-state, and Oedipus' problematic fate.

The Whole World Is Watching, staged in San Diego, California, in 1996, by the American artistic directors Douglas Jacobs and Scott Feldsher, is one example of this trend, which stands out further for its extreme experimental features. Staged in a talk-show format and in accordance with *à la mode* event-oriented interactive theatre, combining and adapting all the three Theban tragedies of Sophocles, this play was planned in part to respond to the Republican National Convention occurring in San Diego.⁴³⁶ Through the live interaction with the audience,⁴³⁷ questions and issues about leadership, media's representation of leadership, breakdowns in control, exploitative disclosure of the truth, and so forth, are addressed. It has been pointed out, while speaking of political parallels in *Oedipus the King* and *Antigone*, "[...] both plays are about

435 As for the United States this trend starts in the 1930s: Foley (2012) 175.

436 See Foley (2012) 178–9 with n. 44.

437 Regarding this, it might be interesting to read a few excerpts from the July 9, 1996 playbill (available at <https://playbill.com/features/article/picture-oedipus-family-on-a-tv-talk-show-100742>): "In a pre-show, audiences will be pumped and encouraged to participate, much as the hired, studio entertainers do on real TV talk shows [...]. How will the audience play the part of the chorus, without a script? Audience members who want to participate will be selected in the pre-show, and it's up to them to stand up and ask questions [...]. For preparation, the rehearsal process for *The Whole World is Watching* will include an audience much earlier in the process than normal shows." The director Feldsher says, "We want to get a sense of it being very spontaneous and having a very free willing quality, and a sense that it wasn't planned ... When things start spinning out of control we want things off the cuff."

a leader stepping up to the plate and confronting the citizens and being in front of an audience."⁴³⁸

Out of the three adapted tragedies composing this 'talk-show Greek trilogy', *Oedipus the King*—the first of the sequence—displayed the greatest interactivity. Oedipus is here the king of a futuristic, plague-afflicted town named Calafia, which is a mix of Mexico and Southern California, formed after the U.S. has been decentralized and states govern themselves (like the Greek city-states). The audience, which acts as the Greek chorus, has been warmed up by protestors outside the studio and is waiting for Oedipus to appear in response to the crisis provoked by the plague. Oedipus interacts with an aggressive talk-show host, who serves as chorus leader. Fictional phone lines are set up for a hypothetical audience outside the studio to call in, after Oedipus asks for clues about the killing of Laius. There is a call from Laius' royal physician, who had given the infant Oedipus up for adoption; his testimony might be thought of as a replacement for Laius' servant and his speech in the original play. After the discovery of the truth, the events follow the original plotline. With the cameras being unable to follow Jocasta and Oedipus into a locked room backstage, the Greek convention of avoiding the display of death and violent injuries (in this case, Jocasta's suicide and Oedipus' self-mutilation) is preserved. This section of the trilogy ends with a report that the king and his daughters escaped from the palace where Creon had in vain tried to confine them.

The interactivity decreases in the following section, *Antigone*. The inversion of the expected sequence that would have *Antigone* as the last portion of the trilogy is another novelty of this adaptation. This second segment presents the heroine in the midst of her trial; it thus resembles a courtroom drama. Wearing an orange prison costume, the Theban princess stands before a hung jury of TV commentators. In a 'Nightline'-fashion, the background of Antigone's story, i.e., the reasons for her being on trial, are revealed through flashback.

The last portion of the trilogy, *Oedipus at Colonus*, consists of a 20-minute deathbed interview with Ismene, the only member of the cursed ruling family who has survived. Through this interview the audience comes to learn the story of Oedipus' death. After Ismene shares her family's story for a final time with the public, she dies, which frees the family from its curse.

In this production, while the costuming and video-clips were contemporary, the TV-style set had Greek-style columns, statues, and symbols of the state. The actors selected for this production must have experience in improvisation, which enabled them to always maintain a connection with the plotline, regardless of the questions of the interacting audience.

438 The quotation is from the Playbill mentioned above, n. 437.

A more pointedly socio-political overtone, mainly relying on a metaphorical meaning of the plague, is to be found in some stage adaptations of the current century.⁴³⁹ These are new stage versions that mainly exploit Oedipus' role as the unwitting cause of his own community's 'malady', by turning him into the unwitting source of new forms of social and/or political 'pollutions' that affect the contemporary world.

The *Oedipus the King* performed at the Hartford Stage Company in Hartford, Connecticut (U.S.), in 2001, is an interesting example, as it turned the plague afflicting Thebes into a metaphor for a still-taboo social issue: AIDS.⁴⁴⁰ Directed by Jonathan Wilson, a professor of Theatre and Drama at Loyola University (Chicago), who has been actively involved as a stage director in professional theatre in Chicago and around the U.S.,⁴⁴¹ and based on Robert Fitzgerald's translation as modified by the African American playwright Adrienne Kennedy, this production took the form of a play-within-a play, with Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* being 'the play within'. A traveling troupe of actors, wearing timeless but distinctly African costumes,⁴⁴² happened to perform Sophocles' tragedy on a white stone platform, set in an unnamed South African village, outside a rural clinic. Here AIDS patients had gathered to see this ancient tragedy, meant to be a metaphor for their own tragic condition. With implicit parallels⁴⁴³ being identifiable between the oracle of Delphi and black magic/shamanism, dictatorship and postcolonial leadership, and incest (as translatable into promiscuous sexuality) and the AIDS crisis, Wilson's adaptation was meant to be a comment on the refusal of some African leaders to face and deal with the crisis seriously, in the same way as Oedipus was blind and in a kind of denial about his own responsibility for the pollution in Thebes until the very end. But since the production seems to be race-based on purpose, it contributes instead to reinforcing the most common stereotypes about Southern Africa, such as the supposedly promiscuous sexuality that would account for 11 millions victims. This result may not have been intended, but the message provided by making Oedipus and the plague that he caused a mirror of the AIDS crisis would be "one that's all too common in

439 The political overtone, meant to reflect the contemporary political circumstances, is certainly nothing new, as it has been often detected in several literary adaptations discussed above.

440 It was also taped for the New York Public Library Theatre Archives.

441 Information about Wilson's career are available at <http://www.luc.edu/dfpa/facultyand-staffdirectory/jonathanwilsonmfa.shtml>.

442 The music and dance components are also African: see, e.g., Foley (2012) 171.

443 As noted by the critic Rohmann (2001), none of them is explicit in the production, "[...] Even the AIDS connection is only expressly made in the lobby displays and the program notes."

certain reactionary circles: “Don’t you dare think this disease has some outside cause. You’ve brought it on yourselves.”⁴⁴⁴ On the other hand, Wilson’s production might be considered as a common move in politically oriented American productions of Greek drama, in that “setting the play in Africa also kept the audience from interpreting the AIDS crisis in the United States itself.”⁴⁴⁵

Peculiar to the 21st century stage adaptations of Sophocles’ play is what I would label the ‘Jocasta motif’. As it has already been seen in the section pertaining to the reception of *Oedipus the King* in literature,⁴⁴⁶ the rise of feminism in this period has made it possible to identify a growing interest in giving more space to, and expanding on, the role of Jocasta as a woman searching for selfhood and as a mother whose forced abandonment of her baby has left an unbridgeable hole in her heart—for which nobody cares!

In the interest of geographical diversity and some peculiar performative features, I shall focus on three specific stage adaptations that focus on Jocasta, namely: *Jocasta Rising* (2004), by the SouthAfrica-born writer and director Carol Michèle Kaplan, *YokastaS Redux* (2005), by the American artistic director and performance theorist Richard Schechner, and *The Ballad of Eddie and Jo* (2006), by the American clinical psychologist and playwright David Sard.

Premiered at Artscape Theatre, in Cape Town, South Africa, in July 2004, *Jocasta Rising* refashioned Sophocles’ play in a way that it reclaimed the woman from the silence that the ancient playwright imposed on her. Kaplan’s intention was in fact to stress the everlasting, and universal, issue of the suppression of the female.⁴⁴⁷ The set reflected well this, as the action was staged both in ancient Thebes and in present-day Cape Town: ancient and contemporary times, as well as ‘canonical’ western and ‘other’ countries, were thus well represented. This mix, meant to convey the everlasting and universal

444 Rohmann (2001). More positive is Weber’s review (2001): although he noticed the race bias, Weber pointed out that “Even with casting and performances that reflect the variety of black experiences, and with costuming, a hauntingly percussive musical score and intervals of dance that are all redolent of African culture, the show feels cross-cultural in a modern vein.”

445 Foley (2012) 171.

446 See above e.g., 233–7. As for stage adaptations, Foley (2012) 186–7 fairly noted that there are indeed earlier works that focus rather on Jocasta, and, more precisely, on the unconventional acceptance of her love and attraction to her son. Mention might be made of *Jocasta, or Boy Crazy* by the American drag performer and author Ethyl Eichelberger (1982): see Foley (2004) 95; (2012) 187.

447 On this play, see Van Zyl Smit (2005), (2008) 383.

validity of the issue, pertained also to the costumes and the language. While Oedipus appeared 'kingly', wearing a glittering cloak and a crown, the outfits of the chorus were completely contemporary—an interesting composition of persons of different ages, gender, and class that represents the simple people whom anyone could meet on the street in a city, people such as: a homeless man pushing a trolley, a black businessman, a young runaway girl, a smartly dressed young woman, etc. As for the language, colloquial Cape Afrikaans was often interspersed in the English dialogues. If a slide of the Parthenon projected onto a huge screen, set at the back of the stage, would signal the transition from the modern world of Cape Town to ancient Thebes, the presence itself of this huge screen, i.e., a product of modern technology, as well as the divulgence of the prophecies through the typically modern tool of text messages, rooted the play in the contemporary world of the audience. This makes it clear that what had happened in ancient Thebes could be happening in modern Africa as well. As the title may suggest, the play represented the ascent of Jocasta from the traditional passive role to which women have been always confined, to a leading role. She in fact grew enough, throughout the representation, to completely alter the role that Sophocles gave her, by refusing to commit suicide and accepting the horror of her incest. "I will not die . . . I can do whatever I can imagine. I can do anything. I am queen Jocasta,"⁴⁴⁸ the woman cried out, resisting the end that the male imposed on her. "Go hang yourself, mother," is in fact the only thing Oedipus is able to say, after calling her an evil woman, once the truth is revealed.

The catalyst of this radical transformation of Jocasta was her daughter Antigone, a new addition in this adaptation. Here Antigone appears as the one who, once informed by the chorus about the family curse, went to Delphi to find out the truth for herself; the one who insisted that the catastrophe could be stopped; and the one who, contributing to her mother's ascent, actually stopped the catastrophe. When Jocasta was eventually, preparing to hang herself, Antigone confronted her, and told her that she represented all women, that she could be the savior of women if she refused to accept the shame and guilt of incest. And it was at this point that Jocasta delivered a monologue that showed her acceptance of the horror of her incest. Now aware of her strength and 'power', Jocasta became the one who stopped the catastrophe. As Oedipus prepared to pierce his eyes, she stopped him, insisting that this is the story of a mother. Now Jocasta can finally talk of how she felt when she lost of her baby, and how she was only fifteen at the time, when she was forced to marry Laius.⁴⁴⁹

448 The quotations are from Van Zyl Smit (2005).

449 This detail about the forced marriage is one of the additions made to the plot, which basically follows Sophocles' plotline. Kaplan's motivation for this addition is explained by

Jocasta can now reclaim this aspect of the female experience that Sophocles neglected. The play ends with mutual embraces between Jocasta and her two children, Antigone and Oedipus; and at the conclusion, Jocasta is looking to a future that will grant women their rightful place at the centre of power.

Refusal of self destruction—perhaps in an openly critical response to the ‘biggest’ moment she was granted in Sophocles, i.e., her rush offstage to hang herself—characterizes the Jocasta of a more experimental, postmodern adaptation entitled *YokastaS Redux*. Directed by Richard Schechner, and written by the Romanian playwright Saviana Stanescu, it premiered at La Mama, the Annex (New York City) in February 2005.⁴⁵⁰ By ‘sampling’ from Euripides, Sophocles, and Seneca, Schechner has created a retelling of the famous story from Jocasta’s perspective, i.e., from a plural and multi-faceted perspective of the same woman ‘broken’ into four characters, each of whom represented Jocasta’s experience at a different age. Four different actresses in fact covered the role of Jocasta, remaining together on the stage most of the time. Yoyo is the youngest, a prepubescent girl determined not to live the life fated for her. Yoko is the 15-years old adolescent who was forced to marry Laius at that young age. She is first seen on the night when she was forced to abandon Oedipus, and last seen on the night before Laius left for his last trip to Delphi. Angry over her ruined life, she seeks revenge. Yono is the young, beautiful woman who welcomed the young Oedipus, married him, gave him four children, and trained him to be a king. And finally there is Yokasta, a sharp-witted, cynical 55-year old woman who has endured it all and has thus gained full knowledge of life. These four Jocastas take turns enacting and reacting to the story, interacting and disagreeing with each other and with the audience. According to the conventions of postmodern theater, many of which Richard Schechner pioneered, the audience is very involved in the production itself. As it arrives, it is entertained with projected bits of celebrity gossip, witty quiz questions, and a piece entitled “It Runs in the Family”, which consists of a genealogy highlighting infanticide and incest, a genealogy that repeats itself throughout Greek mythology, starting with Cronus devouring his own sons. One only actor plays Laius and Oedipus, covering the role of a partner, lover, son, and father;

Van Zyl Smit (2005) in the following way: “Another motif from mythology is introduced. It is revealed that Laius as a young man had seduced a boy and that that was the reason for the curse. Since everyone knew that he was cursed, a wife had to be sought for him who would not object, and that is why Jocasta, who was a young girl of fifteen, was forced to marry him. Another piece of evidence is thus provided of the exploitation of women by men.”

450 On this play, see, e.g., Lewonczyk (2005); Foley (2012) 187.

intermittently he also appears as a Talk-Show host interviewing Yokasta. In one talk-show scene, Medea and Phaedra are set against Yokasta in a bid to be named “tragedy’s baddest mama”. As it is typical of postmodern productions, the show never exactly ends, it just slows down and breaks apart, with the actors changing into their street clothes, asking the audience to take their pictures, and finally inviting everyone to share their snacks on stage.

David Sard’s *The Ballad of Eddie and Jo*, which premiered at New York’s Hudson Guild Theatre in 2006, emphasizes more of Jocasta’s experience in abandoning her child, in response to a growing interest in recovering the relationship between biological parents and children. Such an interest developed after some American strict adoption laws, which insisted on anonymity, began to loosen.⁴⁵¹ Sard’s new version of Sophocles’ play centers on Jo (an apparent abbreviation of the name Jocasta), who is obsessed with her abandonment of her baby boy. As a teenage mother, she becomes persuaded that she could not take care of a child born with a heart defect and thus decides to give him up. After she changes her mind and starts looking for her child, she could not find him: he ‘disappeared’ into the foster care system. Once she meets Eddie (nickname for Oedipus), she takes an interest in him, partly because of her sense of guilt over her abandoned child, and partly to compensate for the cold treatment and indifference that her husband reserved to her. Eddie’s own story seems to develop almost apart, presenting a very vague resemblance with Oedipus’ story. The two end up however having an awkward but passionate courtship and marital life. At the conclusion it is Jo who first discovers the true identity of Eddie; it is she who has to explain to Eddie why the local authorities removed their children from them. After the discovery of the ‘terrible’ truth, Eddie blinded himself and becomes a derelict, but neither Jo nor Eddie appears to know what has happened to the other, which re-enforces the impression that their stories, equally central, remain in a kind of cryptic juxtaposition.⁴⁵²

Probably more frequently than in other periods, the 21th-century stage productions of Greek drama, other ‘classic’ theatrical works, and newly created plays, show some preference for (extreme-) experimental features, which evokes the

451 See Foley (2012) 183.

452 A more recent adaptation centering on the figure of Jocasta—a Jocasta who ‘knows’ (and ‘accepts’) the true identity of Oedipus before engaging in relations with him, a self-absorbed woman trapped in a loveless marriage to her first husband—is *What She Knew*, by the contemporary American dramatist, poet, and director George Hunka. Consisting of a one-woman show (Jocasta), it is a monologue about motherhood, desire, and disempowerment. It premiered in December 2010 at Manatthan Theatre Source: Foley (2012) 274; 335 n. 66.

familiar label *avant-garde* and adheres to the growing 'postmodern' and 'post-dramatic' trends. *The Whole World is Watching* (1996) and *Yokastas Redux* (2005), which have been discussed above, represent a good sample: improvisation, interaction with the audience, which is often included in the dialogue of the play, collage/pastiche of different texts, formats, and media, with a preference for huge screens, and 'fragmented' narrative and characters, are all common to those two plays, and certainly typical of postmodern and postdramtic trends.

With a focus on the very last decade, at least other two stage adaptations should be mentioned: *Oedipus Loves You* (2005, 2006), by the Irish writer Simon Doyle and the artistic director Gavin Quinn, and *A Particle of Dread (Oedipus Variations)* (2013), by the Irish-born American playwright, actor, and director Sam Shepard.

Based on the plays *Oedipus* by Seneca, *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles, and "the writing of Sigmund Freud", *Oedipus Loves You* was first presented in form of 'a work-in progress showing' as part of Dublin Theatre Festival (Ireland) in 2005, and it was performed by the Pan Pan company.⁴⁵³ *Oedipus Loves You* officially premiered at the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin in 2006 and toured mainly in Europe, the U. S., China, and Australia until 2010.⁴⁵⁴ This 70-minute play uses the basic structure of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* but turns Oedipus' family into a dysfunctional, contemporary suburban family, barbecuing in the backyard and having psychotherapy sessions. The plague-ridden town of Thebes is transformed into the malaise afflicting Oedipus' family, which decides to get help. Hence Oedipus, Jocasta, Uncle Creon, and little Antigone, although with some reluctance, enlist the help of the family's psychotherapist, who is no one else than Tiresias. Satirizing to a great extent the seriousness of Sophocles' play and its modern psychoanalytic interpretation, *Oedipus Loves You* thus works as a critique both of the Oedipal myth and of the dominant Freudian elaboration of it. As far as the staging is concerned, it used many of the postmodern techniques: three rooms framed behind the forestage area of the backyard, while creating a sort of landscape, allowed simultaneous actions to be performed, and compete for the attention of the audience. Over the rooms two big flat screen televisions were set: one of them showed a live feed of Oedipus' and Jocasta's bed, clearly evoking the incest theme and

453 Established in 1991 by Gavin Quinn, Pan Pan is a theater company based in Dublin; it is well known for its experimental projects and resistance to settling into well-trying formulas. It has been presenting performances nationally and internationally, including Korea, China, Australia, and New Zealand.

454 This information is from the official website of the Pan Pan company <http://panpantheatre.com/shows/oedipus-loves-you/>. The description of this play and its performance is mainly based on Campbell (2010) 65–7.

helping the audience visualize the dominant Freudian interpretation of the story. This shot of the bed was present for the entire duration of the play, while the other flat-screen television changed regularly: first it provided simultaneous transcriptions of the performers' dialogues; then it provided close-ups of small puppet versions of the characters imitating the action of the onstage characters. Significantly, during the therapy sequence of the play, in which all the characters are psychoanalyzed by Tiresias while barbecuing in the backyard, psychology flashcards with the names and definitions of different diagnoses were projected onto this screen. As often happens when it comes to postmodern 'products', the show has sometimes been found obscure, although the meaning and message that the authors of the script and the Pan Pan company have intended to convey remain accessible, as their website claims:

It is an exploration of the violation of taboos in our society, which we observe almost every day but are unsure of reacting to at the moment of discovery of the truth. *Oedipus Loves You* asks the question—are we still more interested in survival than truth, at this particular juncture of our evolutionary psychological state?

Perhaps more characterized by postmodern aesthetics is *A Particle of Dread (Oedipus Variations)* by the “most enduring of American avant-garde playwrights,”⁴⁵⁵ Sam Shepard. Commissioned by the renowned theatre and Irish company studies ‘Field Day’, it was first performed at the Playhouse in Derry, Ireland, on November 28, 2013. About a year later, in November 2014, it ‘landed’ in the U.S. at the Signature Theatre, New York City. Intrigued by the whole idea of Oedipus because of its themes of destiny, identity, and the search for the truth, and exploiting the features of the detective story that characterize Oedipus’ play, Shepard has turned the ‘mystery’ of Laius’ murder, and the related investigations set in motion by Oedipus, into a modern detective story by juxtaposing two parallel story lines. These in turn are enacted by ‘fragmented’ characters, most of whom double or triple in their roles, within a series of scenes that seemed to be tossed together in no particular order. One reviewer in fact described this production as a “fractured, briskly episodic take on Oedipus”;⁴⁵⁶ while several reviewers, commenting on how it was received by the audience, pointed out that the juxtaposition of characters and situations, and the random way into which they were ‘assembled’, mostly disconcerted the spectators.

455 Brantley (2014). The discussion of this adaptation is based on Brantley’s review as well as on the description provided by Sam Shepard’s official website, at <http://www.sam-shepard.com/particle.html>.

456 Peter Crawley, *The Irish Time* (from Shepard’s website: see above, n. 455).

The two parallel story lines were the ancient Oedipus myth (based on Sophocles) and the murder of a Las Vegas casino owner at the side of a desert highway. It is this murder the one in which the modern counterpart of the Oedipus character, named Otto, becomes interested. Oedipus/Otto is one of the main characters who doubles in roles: as Oedipus he is close to Sophocles' model, and as Otto, he is a retired teacher in a wheelchair, *plagued* by dreams in which he has murdered someone. Once he comes to know of a crime on the highway through the newspaper reports, he starts thinking of some relation between that crime and his dreams. The person killed on the highway is one of the modern versions of the ancient Laius character, who 'triples' in roles, given that the same character is: Laius (shaped on the ancient one); Larry, a modern version of the young Laius who goes to consult a healer when his wife cannot conceive; and Langos, the gangster-casino owner killed on the highway, who had a son (although for a while he denied it) whom he had abandoned in the hills. There is not a 'Jocasta' for Larry and Langos, as the Jocasta character *only* 'doubles' in roles: Jocasta is, in fact, also Jocelyn, the wife of the modern counterpart of Oedipus, i.e., Otto. Jocelyn is portrayed as an American housewife who lives in the Southwest, with a warm personality, calm and unruffled. Interestingly, the linguistic accent shift signals the transition from Jocasta, who speaks with a mild Northern Irish accent, to Jocelyn, who speaks with an American (South-) West accent. This linguistic mix characterizes the entire play: the Irish accent refers to the ancient myth and signals that ancient Greece, or more broadly an older European realm where kings still count, is the set; when characters talk with a twang, the story and situations move into the modern-day American West. This dichotomy is not, however, an entirely clear-cut one, as some intentional slippages occur in between.

While the new contemporary characters, like Otto, Jocelyn, and Larry/Langos are the result of the 'multiplication/fragmentation' of the original ancient characters (respectively of Oedipus, Jocasta, and Laius), there are two completely new contemporary characters who neither have a counterpart in the ancient cast nor play more than their own unique role, which contributes to the developing of the modern story line of the mysterious murder on the highway. These new characters are the American detective Randolph, very keen on the forensic aspect of the work, and the American highway policeman Harrington, very cynical and skeptical toward forensic experts. Harrington in fact sees the crime in a very simple way by assuming that it has been committed by a Mexican gang. On the ground of these specific additions, an array of devices that span the 20th and 21st centuries, from the seer's reading of entrails to DNA analysis, is used to consider and analyze the case. This contributes to the continuous shifting from the ancient to the contemporary world.

The reaction of the critics and the audiences has been mixed, as one can assume on the basis of the reviews. The latter are decisively more appreciative

if they refer to the Derry production, while the reviews pertaining to the Signature Theatre productions are generally characterized by an undercurrent of negativity, mostly pointing out feelings of frustration and disorientation before that “antic intellectual puzzle”.⁴⁵⁷

By way of conclusion, mention should be made of a particular trend which has appeared sporadically, and yet persistently, in the 20th and 21st centuries above all: the use of Sophocles’ Oedipus, whether or not ‘supplemented’ by the Freudian interpretation, merely as a sort of counterpoint or as a structural frame for a new and original stage production which might barely be considered as an adaptation of Sophocles’ play.⁴⁵⁸ The first case discussed hereafter may well clarify this feature: *Edipo a Hiroshima* (“Oedipus at Hiroshima”), by the Italian *avant-garde* playwright Luigi Candoni (1935–1974), published in 1961 and premiered in September 1963 at the Teatro Stabile in Turin (Italy). It was soon translated into Japanese and enjoyed several stagings in Tokyo between 1966 and 1967. One of the most recent performances occurred in a small town in Veneto, Conegliano, in 2006.⁴⁵⁹ As the title may suggest, the event of the atomic bomb and the subsequent issues, among them the growing fear of a nuclear catastrophe during the years of the Cold War (ca. 1947–1979), constitute the very context of this play, whose Oedipus, under the modern name of Alan Darnell, is not a king, nor a parricide and incestuous husband, nor the keen man capable of solving the Sphinx’s riddle. Alan Darnell plays the role of the pilot who dropped the bomb on Hiroshima, on August 6, 1945, i.e., the U.S. Air Force major Claude Robert Eatherly.⁴⁶⁰ According to the playwright himself, it was the ‘surroundings’ of Eatherly’s life, after the end of the war, which have inspired him, as he was impressed by the actions that Eatherly took in response

457 The quotation is from Brantley (2014).

458 I have already expressed a similar concern for other works that are usually considered as a kind of rewriting and/or adaptation of this Sophoclean play, a concern that had driven me to reserve a space for works built on Oedipal motifs at the conclusion of each paragraph.

459 There are no scholarly works pertaining to this play, except for an Italian Master’s Thesis by Alice Toniolo who has devoted one section of her analysis of some Italian revisitations of the Oedipus play precisely to Candoni’s *Edipo a Hiroshima*: Toniolo (2012–2013) 89–8 (of which only pp. 93–8 focus on the play, with an attention to the audience’s reaction and without any comparative analysis with the Greek model; the rest of the section rather pertains to the author’s poetics). The information and discussion that I provided above are partly based on Toniolo; they also depend more on reviews contemporary to the première of this play, such as Dursi (1963); Frateili (1963); Vallauri (1963).

460 General information on Claude Robert Eatherly can be found in *American National Biography Online* (2000), s.v. ‘Eatherly, Claude Robert’ (Oxford Index at <http://oxfordindex.oup.com/view/10.1093/anb/9780198606697.article.0700432>).

to his all-consuming sense of guilt for participating in the Hiroshima bombing and causing so much death and pain. After attempting suicide, Eatherly was treated in Waco, Texas, in a psychiatric hospital for soldiers, but without success. Once out, besides attempting suicide again, Eatherly searched restlessly for some kind of trial and punishment by committing small crimes and thus—as he wished—discrediting the popular myth of his being a war hero. Hoping that he might be able to repent for his military action, he engaged with pacifist groups, wrote letters of apology, and sent money to the people of Hiroshima. Apparently no other person involved in the atomic bombing expressed such a deep sense of guilt as Eatherly did. Condoni's *Edipo a Hiroshima* staged the inner struggle of Eatherly and his eagerness to be punished in the hope of putting his sense of guilt to rest. The struggle is made 'visible' on the set as it takes the form of a trial occurring in the protagonist's subconscious, or, more precisely, in the Freudian expression of the subconscious, i.e., in a dream. This in turn is signaled both by the peculiar dress that the protagonist wears, i.e., pajama, and through the expedient of projecting on a screen the pictures that represent his memories and thoughts. The play consists of a multiple voices monologue as Darnell—the fictional pilot Eatherly, and the counterpoint of Sophocles' Oedipus—plays all the characters involved in his subconscious, dream-like trial: the accused, the judge, the prosecutor, and the defense attorney. Like in Eatherly's real life, so in the play the trial is inconclusive: the prosecutor, who would represent the interest and hypocrisy of the capitalist society, argues that the accused is mentally sick, and thus there would not make any sense to put him on a trial; the defense attorney, who embodies the American patriotism and nationalism, simply states Eatherly's innocence: he is a hero who did what he had to do by following the orders he was given. The judge is completely feeble, does not take a stand, and represents the indolence of public opinion. No one therefore takes the responsibility of condemning the accused, as he wishes, for everyone shares the idea that he is innocent, since, at the time of the bombing, he was just a pawn in the chess game of the system. The play ends when all the stage lights are turned off, except for one that focuses on the protagonist: it is now the actor, who has interpreted the protagonist in his multiple voices, who speaks to, and interacts with, the audience by inviting the spectators to 'cast the verdict', to judge themselves, as to whether the pilot is innocent or guilty. The intention is to push the people to actively participate in, and consciously manage, their own history and destiny.

But what of Sophocles' Oedipus, who is mentioned just once (!) in the play? As hinted at above, the mythic Oedipus works rather as a counterpoint; furthermore, Condoni's Oedipus is explicitly meant to be Freudian (rather than Sophoclean), as he feels a sense of guilt, and is a 'sinner'. What might be common to Sophocles' Oedipus and the Hiroshima-Oedipus is that both killed

without realizing the identity of their victims: the ancient one did not know that Laius was his father, just as the modern one did not realize that those he was killing were just his fellow brothers, as they were human beings like himself. Both—I would like to add—cared for the truth to come out even at their own expense, the difference being that while the ancient Oedipus succeeded in this, the same cannot be clearly said for the modern one. Finally, both acted under the control of some external forces, destiny and superior political power.

Later on, in 2003, another Oedipus play in which Sophocles' tragedy works as frame/background, and where a clear interplay between two story lines emerges, is *Edipo.com* ("Oedipus.com"), co-written and staged by the contemporary Italian comedian and writer Gioele Dix and the artistic director Sergio Fantoni. The first performance took place on October 2003, in a small town of Northern Italy, Cento, at the teatro Borgatti; it premiered then in Rome in 2004.⁴⁶¹ Oxymoronically labelled as *una tragedia tutta da ridere* ("a completely laughable tragedy"), this 100-minute play in two acts exploited the bitter irony that, as is well known, characterizes the Greek model, and it does so in an appreciably hilarious way, the intention being to induce people to understand and accept the flaws and limitations of human life, and the incertitude of human choices, with a ligh-hearted attitude. Like in the other works analyzed in this very last section, here, too, Oedipus and his story have moved rather into the background, as the story that is put into the foreground is the one of a certain Anselmo, an intellectual who is experiencing an existential crisis because of a sentimental breakdown. He is in a psychiatric hospital to recover his mental health. This hospital has very peculiar rules, for the patients are not allowed to read anything: readings can cause intellectual inquietude and can thus interfere with recovery. But Anselmo breaks the rule by secretly reading, over and over, a play with which he has been obsessed for a long time: Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. *Edipo.com* opens with Anselmo on a treadmill reading aloud the scene where the messenger reports Jocasta's suicide and Oedipus' self-blinding. The nurse Giada, who is assigned to him, catches him red-handed; she should report the violation but lets herself be engaged by Anselmo's passionate retelling of the story. This retelling, which includes all the prior events of Sophocles' tragedy, occupies the entire first act. The retelling is enriched by the personal interventions and inventions of Anselmo, with digressions pertaining to his own life, and by interjections allowing contemporary

461 My discussion, along with all the information pertaining to this play, is mainly based on Albini (2003; 2006); Rubino (2009). Page numbers and quotations refer to Dix/Fantoni (2006). The translation, as usual, is my own.

events to break in, with some hilarious and laughable effects. For instance, Oedipus is compared to the homicide detective Columbo (*Edipo.com*, p. 29); the Sphinx's riddle, as well as its solution, is proposed in the form of a modern lullaby—jokes and wordplays (*Edipo.com*, pp. 31–2); and the popularity of Oedipus, after his triumph over the Sphinx, turns him into a modern 'superstar', with the Thebans becoming the 'fans', who applaud him on the street and cry without restraint, *Edipo! Sei un mito!* (Oedipus! You are a 'myth!'), *Edipo.com*, p. 33).⁴⁶² The second act retells the plot of Sophocles' play, starting with the plague. Now Anselmo interprets directly the roles of the characters of the ancient model: he is Oedipus, Creon, and Tiresias, while Giada plays Jocasta. In playing all the characters, Anselmo reads from the play and again adds, paraphrases, digresses, etc. The interventions are always meant to bring about humor. The transition from one character to another is signalled by reading the part with different dialect accents—from a strict North-Italian vernacular to the Sicilian, emulating the *mafioso's* typical language. And it is often the way in which the parts are recited that causes the audience to laugh. The phases of Anselmo-Oedipus' investigation closely follow the sequence of Sophocles' tragedy, but when it comes to the end, Anselmo stops his storytelling: he does not accept that end and changes it. In his new ending, there is neither self-blinding nor exile: Oedipus is given the chance to be put on trial in order for him to defend his innocence.

Edipo.com has toured around Italy for some years, following its première in Rome in 2004. Audiences and critics have mostly reacted very positively, expressing appreciation for the smart interplay between the ancient and the modern, a basic feature that the title itself mirrors by juxtaposing an 'ancient' name/character and a hypermodern phrase borrowed from our internet era.

To conclude with another stage production that uses Sophocles' Oedipus rather as frame or a mere background, mention should be made of *Oedipus Complex* by the American director and writer Frank Galati (1943–). It premiered at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in 2004, and was later performed

462 To understand how this kind of ovation is one of the several innovative interjections provoking laughter, it should be noted that, for Italian audience, it is meant to be a pun. And to understand in which sense it is a pun, it should be noted that 'myth' in Italian often refer to something extraordinary (like the ancient mythic figures), and does not imply—as in American English—the notion of 'being something untrue, unreal, non existent'. *Sei un mito* ("You are a 'myth'") is indeed commonly used to express high admiration, as if to say: you are so great and influential, and thus meant to be remembered and recognized forever, as are the ancient myths. In this context an English counterpart would be 'idol', or, more colloquially, 'super-cool'. In Italian the pun depends on the fact that Oedipus is really a myth, as his story, great and influential, survives forever!

at Chicago's Goodman Theatre in the spring of 2007.⁴⁶³ Galati's play staged a confrontation between Freud himself and Sophocles' Oedipus. In the Oregon production, which set the play in a 19th-century wooden surgical amphitheater in Vienna, Oedipus was a patient who went to Freud for psychological analysis, while he was lecturing to some bearded, black-suited doctors. In this production, the ensuing relation between the ancient and modern story was not always close and clear; it rather resembled a juxtaposition of portions of Sophocles' play and modern scenes analyzing the relation of Freud himself to his loving mother and older father, the way this relation was explored in his ten-year correspondence with his friend Dr. Wilhelm Fliess. That Oedipus seems to be merely a pretext for actually staging Freud's theory and his own complex becomes more apparent in the Chicago production. Here Freud opened the play with a lecture to students and faculty about his interpretation of the Oedipus story; as he took over the role of the priest in the prologue of Sophocles' play, he focused on the loss of his own father and provided an interpretation of the ancient tragedy as a tragedy of fate whose story would be subconsciously shared by the audience. He then discussed his own experience with the unknown through his works on dreams, and he revealed a dream in which his mother would ask him to close the eyes of his dead father. Later, moving into the role of the chorus leader in a dialogue with Oedipus, Freud intervened in the choral ode concerning the mysterious Delphic oracle to explore his subconscious desire to close his father's eyes. In the following phases, after the exit of Jocasta to summon the shepherd upon Oedipus' request, Freud disclosed his jealous anger at his father's relationship with his mother, recalled his dreams about childhood nurses (who are displaced maternal figures), finally turned to his memory of seeing his father approach his naked mother on a train, and recalled the hysterical reaction that forced his mother to go to sleep with him instead. This recalling and 'disclosure' of the fictional character Freud significantly occurred after Oedipus learned the painful truth: the moment of recognition for the two thus concided. "An overpowering need to understand something of the riddles of the world and share my findings with *anyone who wants to learn*"—this is what, at the end, Freud declared that he had in common with Oedipus.⁴⁶⁴

463 See Foley (2012) 180–3.

464 The quotation is from Foley (2012) 181. Freud appears as a character, specifically portrayed as discussing his theory (with the seer Tiresias), in another recent adaptation that takes the form of a novel: *Where Three Roads Meet* by the British writer Salley Vickers in 2008: see Sheenan (2012) 146–7; also a detailed description can be found on Vickers' official website at http://www.salleyvickers.com/pages/books/where_three_roads_meet.htm.

Screen

Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, the main source for Oedipus' story and for Oedipal tropes and themes, has had an enduring and pervasive presence on film as well, starting from the beginning of the 20th century. The first film appeared in 1912 in France under the title *The Legend of Oedipus*.⁴⁶⁵ Little, if anything, can be said about this silent film, for it has been lost; only a few photographs remain as evidence of its production. It is known that this film was also shown in Germany, where a number of scenes, including those of Jocasta's suicide and of Oedipus' self-blinding, were censored and thus had to be cut.⁴⁶⁶

As is the case in most of the Greek tragedies adapted for the screen, films pertaining to Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* might be categorized in two basic groups: (1) filmed theatre, i.e., recordings of stage productions (whether in a studio or in their original/ancient setting),⁴⁶⁷ and (2), far more frequently, updated, modernized versions, with changes in names, characters (in terms both of number and of 'types'), and portions of the plot.

In the first category, the one that certainly stands out is Tyrone Guthrie's 1957 *Oedipus Rex*, a 90-minutes film of his 1955 stage production, featuring the text of William B. Yeats.⁴⁶⁸ The most intriguing aspect of this film is Guthrie's pronounced use of stylized masks, which gives a touch of majesty to the text itself. The masks are mostly symbolic: a golden mask for Oedipus, a silver one for Jocasta, and a ghostly birdlike mask for Tiresias. One of the most subtle effects occurs in the scene with the Corinthian messenger, when Oedipus and Jocasta start realizing who Oedipus really is: the way in which the actors move their head, and Guthrie's subtle use of close-ups—first of Jocasta, then of Oedipus—are so captivating that the viewers, completely absorbed in the drama, can 'catch' the characters' reaction to the discovery of the king's identity, and the subsequent *peripeteia* ("reversal/reversal of circumstances"), as if the masks 'come alive',⁴⁶⁹ almost embodying the facial expressions. A spare and never dominant music enriches this film version by providing an appropriate balance of sounds and silence that allows all the words to be clearly heard.

465 Sheenan (2012) 150. Differently, according to Winkler (2008) 67, the first film was *Oedipe roi* by A. Calmette, still in France, but in 1908; and by 1912 at least three other European versions had appeared.

466 See Hall/Harrop (2010) 99–101.

467 For a collection of related essays, see, e.g., Picon/Vallin (2001).

468 As to Guthrie's production and Yeats' text, see above, 273–4. About this film, see MacDonald (2007) 318–20; Macintosh (2009) 166; Winkler (2008) 78–9; Sheenan (2012) 150–1.

469 Winkler (2008) 78–9.

As hinted at above, modernized cinematic versions are far more frequent: changes and additions to the original vary, and sometimes prove to be quite radical. Several variations are inevitably due to Freud's revival of Oedipus' myth.⁴⁷⁰ Indeed the most influential and profound film rendition of Oedipus' story is deeply imbued with its writer-director's Freudian reading, and experience, of Sophocles' play: the 1967 film *Edipo Re* ("Oedipus the King") by the Italian eclectic artist and highly controversial political figure, Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–1975).⁴⁷¹ Pasolini both wrote the script and directed the film;⁴⁷² furthermore he himself played a part, although a very short one, as he took over the role of the high priest who, like in Sophocles, voiced the Theban suppliants' request for help to free the community from the plague (*Edipo Re*, pp. 406–7). As just mentioned, Pasolini's film is filtered through Freud's interpretation of Sophocles' play. But there is much more: according to the declarations of the director himself, the film is not 'merely' a Freudian cinematic adaptation of the ancient tragedy; it is, more particularly, the re-enactment of Pasolini's Oedipus complex and of his difficult relationship with his own father. Openly admitting the autobiographical essence of his rendition, Pasolini said:

The basic difference between *Oedipus Rex* and all of my other films is that *Oedipus Rex* is the most autobiographical [...]. In *Oedipus Rex* I recount

470 On the other hand, as Winkler notes (2008: 67), Freud has exerted some influence on the cinema at its birth, above all on Hollywood.

471 Before Pasolini, the American film director John Marcellus Huston, had offered an extended version of the discovery of the Oedipus complex through his film *Freud* in 1962: see Winkler (2008) 70–2.

472 The Italian script was first published in 1967 by the Italian Publisher Garzanti (Milan), together with the scripts of *Il vangelo secondo Matteo* ("The Gospel according to St. Matthew") and *Medea*. Page numbers and quotations refer to the 2006—4th edition. An English translation is also available (Matthews 1971). I should note that there are discrepancies between the script itself and the actual lines the actors speak in the movie: see, e.g., below, n. 483. The script is a mix of completely new lines and lines that can be regarded as Pasolini's version of Sophocles' text. The adoption, so to speak, of Sophocles' text by Pasolini must by no means be understood as mere repetition and/or mere translation. There are, indeed, several, significant variations from the original, for which see Cerica (2013) esp. 295–305. A detailed description of the overall movie with a focus on Pasolini's innovations and variations of the story as it is filtered by Freudian lenses is in Fusillo (1996) 31–125. More concise analysis are provided by Mimoso-Ruiz (1992); Lauriola (2000) 244–9; (2011) 39–41; MacDonald (2007) 320–3; Paduano (2008) 164–71; Winkler (2008) 68–70. Further bibliography will be indicated below, as the opportunity arises.

the story of *my* Oedipus complex; the child of the prologue is I, his father is *my* father [...], and the mother is *my* mother.⁴⁷³

Pasolini's visual rethinking and retelling of Sophocles' play in autobiographical-Freudian terms takes a tetradic structure⁴⁷⁴ whose 'extreme' portions, i.e., the prologue and the epilogue, are set in modern time, while the two central ones—which retell the ancient story of Oedipus more closely to the original myth—are set in a 'mythic' time, as suggested by the 'primitive country/society' in which the events took place, i.e., Morocco.⁴⁷⁵ The two central parts—differently from Sophocles—retell all the vicissitudes of Oedipus, thus including, in a chronological sequence, the events at which Sophocles' hinted through flashbacks. The first of the two central sections (a 'Sophoclean premise') in fact includes Oedipus' birth, his exposure and abandonment, his life with his adoptive parents in Corinth, the crucial visit to the oracle of Apollo in Delphi, the fatal encounter with his father Laius whom, unconsciously and unwittingly, he killed, his arrival in Thebes, the fundamental episode of the encounter with Sphinx on the way, the subsequent marriage with his mother, and the receipt of the throne. At this point, with the second of the two central sections starting from the plague decimating Thebes, the plot of Sophocles' tragedy is more closely followed until Oedipus discovers his identity, Jocasta commits suicide, and the hero blinds himself. The 'modern' prologue and epilogue, which frame the 'mythic' part, are set respectively in Pasolini's childhood town, i.e., the northern Italian village Sacile in 1922, and in his 1960s home town, i.e., Bologna. In this modern town Pasolini's blind Oedipus ends his life-journey; like his Sophoclean archetype in *Oedipus at Colonus*, which

473 Betti-Gulinucci (1991) 159–60 (I kept the Italics that I found in the Italian quotation of Pasolini's words). About this admitted parallelism between Pasolini and Oedipus in light of Freud's theory, see, e.g., Amengual (1976) 77–8, 96–8; Brunetta (1986) 389, 391; Aronica 1987. About the difficult relationship of Pasolini with his father, and in general with his family, see Carotenuto (1985) 43–9.

474 See Gervais (1973) 72–5: the four segments would be: 1. Prologue; 2. Sophoclean Premise; 3. Sophoclean Play; 4. Epilogue. Similarly, Schironi (2009) 486 describes the film as organized into four 'movements'. Others, including Rossi/Biocchi/Taddei (1992) 57–63; MacKinnon (1995) 114–9; Fusillo (1996) 31–71; Lauriola (2011) 40, tend to identify a trilogy structure.

475 About the choice of Morocco as the setting of the main part of the film, Winkler (2008) 68–9 observes that Pasolini intended "to achieve an imaginative recreation of the earliest stage of what was later to become classical civilization." See also Schironi (2009) 486: this scholar emphasizes the director's effort to express the idea of myth as an archetypal truth by setting his stories in 'primitive countries', as their primitive societies are closer to the state of nature than modern ones.

is partially incorporated into this epilogue, Pasolini's Oedipus arrives in Bologna as in exile, but he is accompanied by a male Antigone,⁴⁷⁶ Angelo, the same young boy who, under the Greek-like name Anghelos (= 'messenger'), has previously accompanied both the prophet Tiresias and then Oedipus in the two central, 'mythic' sections. This marks the continuity and interconnection between the previous 'ancient' time and the final modern time, the past and the present, the myth and the history contemporary to the director's time.⁴⁷⁷ After wandering through Bologna, this Oedipus returns to the place where, at the beginning of the film, he was first seen as an infant with his mother, thus closing the circle of his life. *La vita finisce dove comincia* ("Life ends where it begins"),⁴⁷⁸ he exclaims when he reaches the place of his birth again, the meadow that has already appeared in the film's opening scene. Here, when he has just been born, he sees his mother for the first time, sealing, from that moment on, his special bond with her.

As mentioned above, the child in the prologue is Pasolini himself, as is the adult Oedipus of the epilogue. It is the modern and autobiographical settings which frame the core of the myth that clearly direct the audience to 'read' the story in an autobiographical and Freudian sense through the 'mythic' time and sections as well. In the prologue, the scene with the infant and the mother, whose special connection occurs through an intense gaze at each other,⁴⁷⁹ gestures towards the son's special affection for the mother in Freudian terms in and of itself. A more evident allusion to the Oedipus' complex is then expressed through the words of the child's father, who clearly resembles Pasolini's real one, as he dresses as a military officer.⁴⁸⁰ The words are not uttered aloud. A typical and very effective technique that Pasolini used in this film to emphasize some crucial moments is to put thoughts and words on the screen to be

476 Some critics see a homosexual reading of Oedipus' myth in this replacement of Antigone with a male: see, e.g., Fusillo (1996) 67–9.

477 Pasolini has masterfully linked the different segments / movements / periods of time, into which he has organized the story, through specific audio-visual signs and cinematic strategies, such as the 'use' of the same actor. I shall refer to some of these strategies later, too. In general, on the parallels established among the various segments and periods of time, see, e.g., Cesarino (1992) 32–4; Fusillo (1996) 40, 44, 48, 60–1, 75.

478 The quotation is from Fusillo (1996) 69, on which, see also below, n. 483.

479 Gaze is a very important medium of communication in this and in general in Pasolini's movies. On the gaze, eyes and body languages in Pasolini's *Edipo Re*, see Lauriola (2011) 41–5.

480 It should be noted that Pasolini's father, Carlo Alberto Pasolini, was a military officer, supporter of Fascism: Schironi (2009) 487 with n. 12. On the difficult family relationships, see also above, n. 473.

read. So we read the following poignant thoughts that the father had at his first approach to the baby:

He [sc. the father] is listening to his own inner voice [...]: "Here you are, the child who is going to take your place in the world. Yes, he will cast you away and take your place. He will kill you. He is here exactly for this. [...] The first thing he will steal from you is your wife [...]. Because of his love for his mother, he will murder his father. And you can do nothing about it."

(*Edipo Re*, p. 356)⁴⁸¹

Adapting in Freudian terms the well-known prophecy that Sophocles' Oedipus received from Apollo (*Oedipus the King* 791–3), Pasolini subtly turned it into the expression of his own father's conscious hostility toward him, thus setting the stage for the re-enactment of his own complex through the following 'mythical' sections in which he continued to identify himself with Oedipus. The Freudian/autobiographical tone is strengthened by the emphasis given to the love-incest motif as the 'reason' for the parricide; and the persistence of this Freudian/autobiographical tone in the 'mythical' central segments as well is signaled by several elements, among which three seem to me very significant. (1) The mother of the baby boy in the opening scene of the prologue is played by the same actress who plays Jocasta in the central segments—a device that contributes both to the film's continuity and, in consequence, to the total identification of Pasolini with Oedipus. (2) Like in the prologue, the father is almost obsessed with being replaced by the son in his private life, i.e., as a husband, in the 'mythical' segments, once Oedipus, informed of the Sphinx's existence,⁴⁸² is told that whoever defeats that monster will become Jocasta's husband, he shows an obsessive desire to face the Sphinx, to conclude the encounter as the victor, and thus to become (although unawares) his mother's husband. The notion of promised kingship, which is a fundamental component in the original myth, is not even mentioned in Pasolini's version: the promise of Jocasta's love, not the crown, is the driving force of action of this Oedipus. (3) Finally, a further confirmation of the persistence of the Freudian tone in the 'mythical' segments, too, with a prominence being given to the mother-love motif, is the

⁴⁸¹ About this scene see also Fusillo (1996) 46–7.

⁴⁸² In contrast with the Sophoclean text, Pasolini has incorporated the episode of the encounter with the Sphinx in the movie. On this scene and the subconscious level of self-awareness which the Pasolini's Oedipus displays—with a subsequently Freudian repression of the uncomfortable knowledge—see Lauriola (2011) 40–2 with n. 13.

visual connection that Pasolini established between pestilence and incest: after each of the three lovemaking scenes between Oedipus and Jocasta, the director used abrupt cuts to focus on the plague in town. In Sophocles, the pestilence is caused by the failure to avenge Laius' murder, as well as by the polluting presence of his murderer in town; in Pasolini, it is the son's love for the mother, filtered as it is through Freud. With the discovery of the truth, the plot resembles the original one, since—as hinted at above—Jocasta commits suicide and Oedipus blinds himself and goes in exile, which is set in modern time in the epilogue. Here the exile ends in the same place where the journey of this Oedipus begins, the place where he came to life, the meadow where Pasolini/Oedipus' special affection for his mother started. Significantly, it is in this place that Oedipus, while ending his wandering, utters his farewell to the light:

O luce che non rivedrò più, che eri prima in qualche modo mia, mi illumini ora per l'ultima volta. Sono giunto. La vita finisce dove comincia.

O light that I shall no longer see, that was somehow mine before, now you shine on me for the last time. I have reached my place. Life ends where it begins.⁴⁸³

To understand the meaningfulness of Pasolini/Oedipus' last utterance, it would be useful to recall that, in Sophocles, Oedipus' address to the light and his reference to his last sight of it (*Oedipus the King* 1182–3) occur when “all has come out clear”, i.e., at the moment of the realization of his own real identity and, consequently, of the entire terrible truth of his life story. Indeed, Pasolini/Oedipus has finally understood and realized his real identity, as a Freudian Oedipus, a ‘child’ who, consciously or not, has always lived on his mother's love, to whose ‘womb’ he ultimately returns.⁴⁸⁴ Similarly to the Sophoclean Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus*, for Pasolini/Oedipus this realization comes along with a form both of acceptance of his identity⁴⁸⁵ and of reconciliation with himself.⁴⁸⁶ The journey of Pasolini/Oedipus thus ends with a clear

483 The quotation is from Fusillo (1996) 69; this is one of the several lines which belong specifically to the cinematic version, as they do not occur in the corresponding part of the script. On the significance of these lines, see, also, Lauriola (2000) 244 with n. 4; Paduano (2008) 165 with n. 55.

484 See Fusillo (1996) 70.

485 On Pasolini's difficulty in accepting his own homosexuality, see Fusillo (1996) 67–9.

486 Schironi (2009) provides a different interpretation of the overall film and its end, an end which—according to this scholar—would mark the failure of Pasolini-Oedipus: she argues that the identification of Pasolini with Oedipus, unanimously acknowledged, is something more than a psychoanalytical one. Emphasizing the efforts of Pasolini

vision of his identity (who he really is), a vision he had always been refusing to acknowledge, as his body language indicated throughout the film when he covered his eyes before facts or events that might allude to the 'terrible' truth.⁴⁸⁷ "Life ends where it begins," Pasolini/Oedipus discovers at the end: the circular trajectory of his self-discovery is brilliantly accentuated not only by the return of images from the beginning of the film, i.e., the birth place and meadow, but also by the return of the musical themes that accompanied those initial images: namely, the 'mother-musical-theme, i.e., the one first played in the prologue when Oedipus the infant (and all of us with him) sees his mother's face for the first time;⁴⁸⁸ and the 'father-musical-theme', which, likewise, was first heard in the prologue along with the appearance of Oedipus' modern father as a military official. Significantly both parents are thus re-evoked as Pasolini/Oedipus' different interactions with them have 'given birth' to the real 'self' with which he consciously comes to terms only at the end.

A few years after Pasolini's film, precisely in 1969, in another, 'distant' corner of the world, i.e., in Japan, a disconcerting, and yet intriguing, *avant-garde* film adaptation of Sophocles' tragedy appeared on the screen: *Bara no soretu*, known in the West under the English title *Funeral Parade of Roses*, directed by Toshio Matsumoto (1932–).⁴⁸⁹ By adapting Sophocles' story in its Freudian reception, Matsumoto used the ancient myth to represent the socio-cultural

as intellectual and activist to empower proletarian class (see, e.g., pp. 497–8 with n. 38), Schironi argues that Pasolini draws on the evolution of the Oedipus character in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, and uses the figure of Oedipus as the blind wise as a symbol both of his own role as intellectual/seer in the modern world and of his isolation (as such and as a homosexual) in contemporary 20th-century Italy. Pasolini-Oedipus has failed in his mission because nobody has listened to him; the blind Oedipus cannot move forward, thus symbolizing what Pasolini felt about his mission, i.e., there is no place and no future for the intellectual in modern Italy. Therefore, the isolation continues and he can only look inwards in self-analysis, by thus going back to his origin.

487 About this gesture and other related body language, see Lauriola (2011) 41–5.

488 'The mother-musical-theme, and then 'the father-musical-theme' are my translation of Fusillo's description of those musical themes (in Italian, respectively: *il tema della madre*: Fusillo [1996] 41] and *il tema musicale paterno*: Fusillo [1996] 69). The 'mother-musical-theme' is the *Adagio* of Wolfgang Amedeus Mozart's *String Quartet No. 19* (K465, nicknamed "Dissonances"). This is the only 'Western' music occurring in the entire film, as the rest consists of a mix of Romanian folkloric songs and Japanese music: see, e.g., Junghrinrich (1985) 44–5. 'The father-musical-theme' evokes military marching and singing: the fact that Pasolini's father was a military officer has certainly played a major role in this choice.

489 On this director and his cinemtatic aesthetics, see O'Rourke (2006). For an accurate analysis of this movie, see Danese (2012).

reality of Japan at the end of the '60s when—as in many other parts of the world—a profound transformation occurred, with the traditionally 'codified' socio-cultural values being called into question. It was the time when the student movement—with its activism against war (namely, the Vietnam war) and in favor of a *hippie* lifestyle—drug use, and the issue of 'diverse' sexual identity were unsettling everyday life. Homosexuality, in particular, was the contemporary socio-cultural 'disturbance' on which Matsumoto focused his attention. Setting the story of Oedipus in contemporary Japan, the director reversed the sexual identity of all the characters and changed the main threads of the plot. Oedipus is Eddie, a transvestite gay man who works in a transgender pub in Tokyo. He engages in a love affair with Gonda, the pub's owner, who in turn is in a relationship with Leda, the 'queen'-manager of that pub. In this triangle, Gonda, who 'reigns' over the pub, is Jocasta's counterpart, while Leda, a self-ish, possessive lover who became obsessed with jealousy for Eddie, is Laius' counterpart. Through the filter of Freud, Eddie/Oedipus and Leda/Laius are in a way a metaphor for the generational gap between son and father, i.e., the young and old generations. Eddie represents the youth and the new trends that are dismantling the traditions, while Leda represents those traditions, as her dress (a typical Japanese Kimono and a geisha hairstyle) makes clear.⁴⁹⁰ Eddie's Oedipal identity and therefore the family relations of the ancient tragedy gradually emerge as he starts having confusing memories of his past under the stimulus of visual clues throughout the film, clues that become more and more clear—exactly as it happens in Sophocles' play during Oedipus' investigation, with the difference that Eddie has, in Freudian terms, 'repressed' and 'removed' to the subconscious his secret, real identity. Abandoned by his father, Eddie lived his childhood with his mother wishing to take his father's place and to become the 'master of the house'. Ridiculed and humiliated by his promiscuous mother when she discovered his sexual inclination, Eddie killed her and went to prison. Once he was free, he just forgot everything, saving one only family picture, one where his father's face is not clearly visible.⁴⁹¹ Hence he changed 'identity'; by favoring his sexual inclination he has thus become a transvestite gay man. Once he has engaged in a relationship with Gonda, he has 'to win' him from Leda; he even physically fights with her.⁴⁹² In a way becoming the Sphinx's counterpart, Leda, defeated, commits suicide.

490 Correspondingly, Eddie's clothes and hairstyle are typically Western: Danese (2012) 318.

491 Significantly, this picture remains saved in a book entitled *Il ritorno del padre* ("The father's coming back"): Danese (2012) 318.

492 The fight takes the form of a parody of a western duel, and it contributes to the mix of tragedy and comedy which characterizes this and other works of Matsumoto: Danese (2012) 326. Indeed, in the trailer, the English subtitle *A Modern Parody of Oedipus Rex* is

Now the triumphant Eddie becomes co-owner of Gonda's 'reign', i.e., the pub. It is at this point that the family's terrible truth surfaces. Finding by chance the picture that Eddie saved, Gonda recognizes himself, his wife—Eddie's mother—and thus his son. Unable to stand the truth, like Jocasta, he commits suicide, and when Eddie finds his corpse beside the picture, he understands everything and blinds himself. It now becomes clear how, building on the male homosexuality theme, Matsumoto has re-designed the Oedipus' myth by replacing parricide with matricide and turning incest with the mother into incest with the father. By exploiting experimental, *avant-garde* cinematic aesthetics, Matsumoto did not confine himself to simply 'evoking' the current turmoil of the Japanese society, as far as homosexuality was concerned, through the fictional story of Eddie/Oedipus. Indeed, he often mixed the fictional sequences with documentary scenes filming real interviews with the Japanese youth of that time, thus presenting thoughts about sexual diversity and drug use. This mixture and the accompanying interruptions—however well harmonized with the whole—contribute to the fragmented/collage impression that Matsumoto had intended to give to his film, consistent with his aesthetic 'credo'. The plot, for example, does not unfold in its chronological and logical sequence as summarized above; past and present (and even future) in fact overlap; the past is recalled through symbolic images or events, and similarly the future, as well as the outcomes of the story are just symbolically alluded to. It is by the 'association of ideas', under the stimulus of visual clues, that all the pieces of Matsumoto's mosaic are chronologically re-built and reconnected by the audience. Moreover, sometimes the same scene is shown more than once and from different angles, to provide the spectators the chance to see the same scene differently, and to be able both to read it in different contexts and to connect the symbolic meaning of those different contexts. For instance, in the first scene when Eddie and Gonda are filmed as they come out from their love nest, they saw Leda on the other side of the street and expressed concern. As this scene is shown more and more and enlarged, details symbolically allude to the connections among these three people, and even to their destiny: significantly a hearse passes between the couple and Leda. Peculiar 'objects' that significantly evoke the essential themes of both the ancient fictional story and the contemporary real sexual-identity-issue, for which the myth works as a metaphor, are abundant. To my mind, the mirror is one of these suggestive objects, as it deals with identity/self-image and the replication of one's own identity/image.⁴⁹³

added to the Japanese title: see Danese (2012) 335 fig. 3. On the mixture of tragedy and laughter that characterize this movie, see also below 300.

493 For a detailed analysis of the scene with the mirror, see Danese (2012) esp. 323–5.

The *finale* of this complex, intriguing film is completely original. As hinted at above, the end resembles the ancient myth as Eddie/Oedipus blinds himself upon the discovery of the truth and the corpse of Gonda. The scene is very crude, but it is interrupted at the crucial moment with the intrusion of a TV sequence where a theater and cinema reviewer, who was famous by that time, comments on the scene with the following words:

Horrible, isn't it? This is the man's wretched destiny: what a *mix* of cruelty and laugh!

But now, care not to miss the next show! Bye-Bye.⁴⁹⁴

Tragedy and comedy border on each other, as do male and female, past and present . . . Perhaps this is another of the director's ways to call attention to the contemporary struggles pertaining to the sexual diversity theme from which the so-called *queer* culture originated in the late '90s.⁴⁹⁵

With Freudian psychoanalysis in general and the Oedipus complex in particular being under increasing attack in recent years, satire and parody have been targeting Sophocles' Oedipus, as read through the filter of Freud's theory, in several cinematic productions, above all in the 20th century.⁴⁹⁶ In particular the Oedipal archetype of the domineering—if not tyrannical—love of the mother, to whom the son is morbidly subjected, is the prominent motif in the films that have parodied on the story of Sophocles' Oedipus. Such is the case in the 1989 short film *Oedipus Wrecks* by the acclaimed American writer, director, and actor Woody Allen.⁴⁹⁷ Running about 40 minutes, *Oedipus Wrecks*—clearly a pun on *Oedipus Rex*⁴⁹⁸—constitutes the third part of a film anthology entitled *New York Stories*, with New York being the common setting of the three

494 The quotation is my English translation of Danese's Italian quotation from the movie (Danese [2012] 331).

495 On the connection between this movie and the *queer* culture, see, in particular, Danese (2012) 309–10. Another *queer* version of Oedipus' myth is *Strella (A woman's way)* by the Greek filmmaker Panos H. Koutras, released in 2009, on which see Coavoux (2013).

496 For a concise, yet representative, overview, see, e.g., Wrinkle (2008) esp. 87–8.

497 Woody Allen's obsession with the 'persona' of a neurotic urban intellectual, almost always in analysis, and invariably played by himself, is well known. The Oedipal archetype of the domineering, overzealous mother also duly recurs in his work, as it is one of the hallmarks of Jewish humor.

498 The name Oedipus indeed lends itself to easy punning (Winkler [2008] 88 n. 25), as we have already seen so far in the cases, for instance, of *Oedipus Pig* (above, 225–7), and *Oedipus Nix* (above, 227). See, also, below, n. 500.

short films.⁴⁹⁹ Oedipus, played by Woody Allen, is a 50-year-old lawyer named Sheldon, whose successful life is marred by his hyper-critical, overbearing mother, a problem for which he is in therapy. He wishes her 'death', or, more precisely, her disappearance from his life, which magically happens, but only for a short time. She in fact magically reappears from the sky, hovering above the city with her gigantic face, to haunt her son and make his life even more miserable. Eventually, she comes back to earth, i.e., reappears in normal life, significantly when she finally approves of the new girl for whom her son falls, possibly finding her to be very similar to his mother!⁵⁰⁰

As it has been frequently pointed out throughout this study, Sophocles' Oedipus is certainly not Freud's Oedipus, and there are indeed cinematic renditions that embrace more closely the important themes of the ancient play and have accordingly adapted the tragedy to explore, and reflect on, important modern historical processes and junctures. Such is the case, for instance, in *Der Fall Ö* ("The case for decision of Ö"), by the contemporary German film director and screenwriter Rainer Simon (1941–), released in 1991;⁵⁰¹ *Edipo Alcide* ("Oedipus the Mayor"), by the contemporary Colombian director Jorge Alí Triana (1942–), released in 1996;⁵⁰² and a more recent movie by the French-Canadian film director and writer Denis Villeneuve (1967–), entitled *Incendies* ("Scorched," 2010).⁵⁰³

Der Fall Ö might be labeled as a 'film within a film'. The main story is set in Greece during the Second World War, near Thebes, and it is about shooting a film of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* by a German squad, set against the background of war. The young soldier who plays Oedipus appropriates his role to

499 The other two parts are *Life Lessons* directed by Martin Scorsese, and *Life Without Zoë* by Francis Ford Coppola.

500 Similar to *Oedipus Wrecks* is *Ödipussi* (1988), a movie by the popular German comedian, humorist, and film director Loriot (i.e., Bernhard-Victor Christopher-Carl von Bülow, 1910–2011). Here too there is a domineering mother who runs her middle-aged son's life and interferes in his first attempt at meeting a woman. For this son, dreams are the only escape from his oppressive mother. The title is a pun on Oedipus (and the Oedipus Complex) built through the term of endearment that the mother uses for her son, i.e., 'Pussi'; see Winkler (2008) 88. *Mighty Aphrodite* (1995) is another movie by Woody Allen, which to an extent incorporates—rather than adapts—Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*; the story works as a sort of background in that a chorus and a character from Sophocles' play summarize Oedipus' myth to introduce his modern 'heir' (played by Allen himself) and his erotic quandaries: see Winkler (2008) 87.

501 See Michelakis (2004) 209–10.

502 See Anderson (2012) 608.

503 See, in particular, Rodighiero (2012) 368–83, esp. 371–83.

the point that Oedipus' gradual tragic realization and self-discovery becomes his own: the soldier's realization of the ancient hero's tragic situations takes place along with the realization of his own position as a German soldier in occupied Greece. The team could not end its cinematic project, as it is eventually trapped in an ambush by Greek partisans who hover ominously over the story of the entire film. All ends with a gun battle between the partisans and the German squad, which is meant to re-enact Oedipus' encounter with Laius, i.e., the encounter of the individual with the destiny that, in this case, history has reserved for him. Differently from Sophocles' play, this fatal encounter ends, rather than starts, the whole story; and, as a consequence, Oedipus 'ends' here—that is to say, the German soldier playing Oedipus dies here, along with the rest of the squad. This Oedipus' story has a tragic epilogue: no redemption, even if one is innocent. The issue of guilt and responsibility before historical processes like Nazism appears to be the basic motif on which this cinematic adaption has been built, an issue that is of special importance for post-war Germany, which strives to cope with Nazism and its aftermath.⁵⁰⁴

History, a more recent and local one, intersects the film adaptation *Edipo Alcade* as well. Sophocles' story is transplanted into present-day Colombia, 'plagued' by civil violence. Thebes becomes a small town in the Andes where the local police force vainly tries to manage the hostilities between rebel guerrillas and the private militia of the rich landowners. Edipo is the new 'ruler', i.e., the newly arrived mayor who is confidently persuaded that he can 'cleanse' the town of violence, exactly as Sophocles' Oedipus shows the confidence and determination to save his community from pollution. This Oedipus, too, has unknowingly killed his father, Layo, on his way to the town, on a bridge—again simply in a dispute over the right of way. A short time later, again unknowingly, he happens to sleep with his mother Yocasta. Along with the parricide and incest, the political failure of Sophocles' Oedipus is re-enacted as well. In Triana's version, Oedipus' ignorance of his parricide and incest couples with his inability to understand his limitations as a leader and, thus, to save his community. Ironically, as he tries to negotiate with the rebels and to bring peace to the place, he becomes a catalyst for a war, i.e., like his precursor, the real cause of the demise of his community. Although it follows rather closely Sophocles' plot, including the climactic suicide of Yocasta and the self-blinding of Edipo,

504 Regarding this, see, e.g., Plenzdorf (1988) 289–329. Michelakis also observes that the production of the film, in 1991, by the Eastern German Studio DEFA gives it a complementary layer of meaning, as it also provides a window into the self-questioning that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall: Michelakis (2004) 210 with n. 15.

the *finale* is different and quite pessimistic, as the Colombian 'plague' does not end at all with Edipo's departure.

Denis Villeneuve's *Incendies* ("Scorched," 2010) resembles Oedipus' story in particular in its journey backward toward the discovery of one's own real family history and, in consequence, of one's own identity, along with one of the two 'crimes', in this case incest. At the same time, the ancient tragic plot is used as a canvas on which the brutal consequences of the civic and religious war in the Middle East were painted. Nominated for the Oscar award in 2011, and earning about 15 other awards nomination, this movie is a film adaptation of the play *Incendies* by the Lebanese-Canadian playwright Wajdi Mouawad.⁵⁰⁵ Mouawad's script indeed represents the 'missing link' between the movie and Sophocles' play, as Mouawad's works, including *Incendies*, show a constant engagement with ancient Greek Drama, although the ancient tragic themes and figures are not his focal point. Villeneuve's film can thus claim an indirect engagement with the Sophoclean Oedipus, although perhaps the most important modification, among the very few that the director applied to Mouawad's script, refers to a fundamental detail of Oedipus' story, i.e., his feet as being the mark of his real identity. The swollen feet are replaced by a tattooed heel as, in the movie, Oedipus' grandmother (an additional character) marked his heel on the back with three dots at the moment of his abandonment. Through several close-ups this tattooed heel is indeed spotlighted in the movie's crucial moments from the opening scene onward, and, as we will see, it constitutes the mark for the recognition of Oedipus as the son-'husband' of this movie's Jocasta. The reason for marking the baby's heel constitutes an important variation, as the grandmother's intention is exactly opposite of the one that led Sophocles' Laius to inflict a 'mark' on Oedipus' feet: while the first, hoping for the baby's survival, imprinted a mark so it could be found and recongnized in the future, the latter—as is well known—intended to damage the baby to be sure he would not survive. This variation is due to the adaptation of the circumstances of Oedipus' procreation and birth to the context and background of the movie's story: Jocasta, recognizable in the main female character of Nawal, is a Lebanese Christian who incurs the violent disapproval of her family when she falls in love with a Muslim. The ideological and religious conflict afflicting the country obviously drives her family to oppose her love and to force Nawal to give up the 'product' of that unfortunate love, her baby/future-'Oedipus'.

505 Originally performed in French in 2003, the play has been translated into English with the title *Scorched* by the Canadian dramaturg and literary translator Linda Gaboriou. The play is actually part of a tetralogy entitled *Le Sang des promesses* (1999–2009): an analysis of all the four *pièces* is provided by Rodighiero (2012) 359–8.

Although it was almost never mentioned, Lebanon, and more specifically the Lebanese politics and society in the '70s and '80s, and the war and the atrocities of those years, are behind the story.⁵⁰⁶ After participating as an activist and clandestine militant in several events that clearly evoked the historical episodes of the Lebanese civic war, Nawal fled the country to finally set in Canada. But, differently from Sophocles' *Jocasta*, she always looked for her abandoned child, only to find him as torturer at Kfar Rayat prison,⁵⁰⁷ where Nawal was imprisoned for having become part of the plot to assassinate a political leader. But this and other important details of her life story, which allow for establishing a connection with Sophocles' play, are the result of an investigation—a discovery-journey—that Nawal's twins, born later from another 'union', and who grew up in Canada, have to undertake to fulfill their mother's will. Similarly to Sophocles' play, the story begins 'from its end', unfolding, as a retrospective reconstruction, the family history and, with that, the family connections of each member. All were unaware of those connections, except for Nawal/Jocasta, who ultimately discovers the truth and wishes that her family may discover it as well. The reading of her will by a notary opens the movie: the twin, Jeanne and Simon, come to know they have a living father and another brother; they are in fact given two letters to be delivered to those lost family members. Once the mission is accomplished they can bury their mother properly. It is in this way, and for this reason, that the twins undertake a voyage which leads them to 'retrace' their mother's life story in the country of her youth, by visiting places and people who could give some clues; and it is in this way that they come to know what they have discovered about both their mother and themselves, and their real origin. Through and during this journey, Jeanne and Simon discover and follow the life of their mother's first-born, whom she was forced to abandon. His name was Nihad, and although he too searched for his mother, he grew corrupted, out of necessity, until, under the name of Abou Tarek, he became a sadistic torturer at Kfar Rayat. Here, in the years in which Nawal—i.e. the twins' and Nihad/Abou Tarek's mother—was imprisoned, Nihad/Abou Tarek repeatedly tortured and raped Nawal. Out of this abuse Nawal gave birth to twin children, precisely Jeanne and Simon, with whom she could reunite after being released from prison. The movie reaches its climax with this discovery: Abou Terek, who is the lost Nihad, is the twins'

506 See, e.g., Rodighiero (2012) 359–60.

507 Kfar Rayat is meant to evoke a real prison, Khiam prison in Southern Lebanon, where the Israeli army held and brutally tortured thousands of Lebanese hostages from 1985 to 2000: see Grutman/Ghadie (2006) 98–106; Farcet (2011).

missing father and brother. He is 'Oedipus',⁵⁰⁸ who, in turn, discovers his identity as son and 'husband' of his mother, and father and brother of his children, when he reads both letters. The final scene focuses on Nawal's grave: now she can be completely and appropriately buried; her grave can be covered by a gravestone on which Nawal's full name and dates are inscribed.

By using Sophocles' play and an unspecified Middle Eastern country plagued by civic war as canvases, the intention both of the playwright Mouawad and, in consequence, of the director Villeneuve has been to paint a new story of loss and redemption. By being not specific in situating Nawal' and her children's history, the story becomes a universal and 'mythic' one where the setting is less important than the civic war that occurs in it.

As it has already been seen in the other areas of receptions discussed above, cinematic versions, too, include different cases for which the problematic terminology *en vogue* in reception studies, such as 'adaptation', seems to be even more inadequate, although not altogether appropriate. There are cases where the changes might be so radical that, once again, only the presence of some themes, which are integral to the original play, would allow one to recognize the Sophoclean 'matrix', and thus to trace some connections, whether they are meant to be detected in the author/director's intentions or are freely—and perhaps, sometimes, arbitrarily—established by either scholars or audiences.⁵⁰⁹ 'Oedipal overtones', or 'Oedipal presence', and 'Oedipal analogies' constitute the most common terminology used in the analysis of cinematic works that are somewhat evocative of Sophocles' play.⁵¹⁰ Oedipal overtones have been recognized in different film genres, such as (1) science fiction: for instance, from the 1956 *Forbidden Planet*, directed by the American Fred M. Wilcox (1907–1964),⁵¹¹ to the more recent series *The Matrix* (1999), *The Matrix Reloaded* (2001), *Matrix*

508 The Oedipus of this movie is, in a way, a fragmented one, as he can also be recognized in the twins who undertake the self-discovery journey, by investigating and 'putting together' all the evidence that they were gradually collecting to solve the 'riddle' that her mother has given to them.

509 An extensive overview of Oedipal overtones in different genres of film, as described above, is provided by Winkler (2008).

510 It is true enough that some of the movies analyzed above might be well fit this category as well. As it has been pointed out several times, choice and distribution have posed several challenges. A certain degree of closeness to the original plot and (with a few exceptions, as in the case of Woody Allen's film) the historical and social relevance of the issue conveyed through the cinematic adaptation have been the more reasonable, and, hopefully, less subjective criteria I tried to apply.

511 See, e.g., Bucher (2015).

Revolutions (2003),⁵¹² and one of Steven Spielberg's masterpieces, the 2002 film *Minority Report*;⁵¹³ (2) horror /psychological films: the entire oeuvre of the famous Alfred Hitchcock (1899–1980) proves to be rich in Oedipal themes;⁵¹⁴ (3) thriller / detective films, in particular those in which the investigation results in the discovery of the investigator's identity as the criminal and/or criminal-relative: such is the case, for instance, of the contemporary London director Alan Park's *Angel Heart* (1987),⁵¹⁵ and of the American independent film director John Sayles' *Lone Star* (1996).⁵¹⁶

This list is certainly not exhaustive,⁵¹⁷ nor is there enough space for a detailed analysis of even only the items listed above, which is also beyond the scope of this chapter for a Companion volume.

In the name of the uninterrupted fascination and influence of Sophocles' play on the modern mind and general collective imagination, I will conclude with a very bizarre short animated film which, while it can be fairly perceived as a 'desecration' of such a wonderful and memorable tragedy as Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, once more demonstrates the vitality and universality of this ancient story: Jason Wishnow's *Oedipus* (2004), i.e., "The story of Oedipus, in 8 minutes, performed by vegetables" as its tagline announces.⁵¹⁸ Realized with a digital camera as a parody of Hollywood epic films, it consists of a few scenes evocative of Oedipus' story, but not faithful to it, and the characters are indeed vegetables: Oedipus is a sad potato, Jocasta a tomato, Laius a mighty broccoli, Tiresias a grim garlic... Oedipus, the sad potato, ironically carries a potato peeler, the 'weapon of his own demise', the one with which he kills 'mighty broccoli', Laius, and, upon the discovery of the truth, gouges his own eyes out.

⁵¹² See Winkler (2008) 73–4.

⁵¹³ See Bakewell (2008); Anderson (2012) 608–9.

⁵¹⁴ See Winkler (2008) 79–85.

⁵¹⁵ See Campanile (2009).

⁵¹⁶ See Bakewell (2002).

⁵¹⁷ Mention, for instance, should be made of a few other films for which scholars have noted some influence by, or resemblance to, Sophocles' play. Such is the case of Claude Berri's *Jean de Florette* and *Manon of the Springs* (late 1980s), on which see Reinhardt (1997); Arey-Binet (2000); Raber (2009); and Ethan Joel Cohen's *A Serious Man* (2009), on which see Umurhan (2015).

⁵¹⁸ About this *sui generis* adaptation, see, e.g., Winkler (2008) 91; Manzoli (2012) esp. 354–5.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Oedipus the King*

As anyone may easily expect, the scholarship pertaining to the reception of this specific play by Sophocles is quite vast, and should one add works of scholarship concerning the overall myth of Oedipus and its “later analogues”,⁵¹⁹ the amount would become almost immensurable. What follows can but be a concise survey which is meant to highlight some ‘milestones’, including a number of studies that have been used and mentioned in the present essay.

Although Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* is the focus of this chapter, mention of Lowell Edmunds’ works, an authority on the *Nachleben* of Oedipus’ overall myth, is right and proper. After “Oedipus in the Middle Ages” (*Antike unde Abendland* 22 [1976] 140–55), and “The Cults and the Legend of Oedipus” (*Harvard Studies of Classical Philology* 85 [1981] 221–38), early in the ‘80s Edmunds soon embarked on an extensive study of a specific, crucial motif in the Oedipus myth and its variations, i.e., the encounter with the Sphinx and the riddle, against the background of his main (or one of his main) interest, that is, the relationship between classical literary texts and story and the folklore. In 1981 he published a book entitled *The Sphinx in the Oedipus*, and a few years later, in 1983, together with the folklorist A. Dundes, he co-edited the book *Oedipus: A Folklore Casebook*, a collection of about 19 essays examining variations of the myth across different countries (from Africa to South America, from the Eastern Europe to the Pacific), different periods, and from different viewpoints (psychological, sociological, anthropological, etc.). Only two years later, in 1985, Edmunds published an even more comprehensive study: *Oedipus. The Ancient Legend and its Later Analogues*. Very helpful to those who have been trying to track the ‘diaspora’ of Oedipus’ tragedy is a later paper by Edmunds by the telling title “Oedipus in the Twentieth Century: Principal Dates” (*Classical and Modern Literature* 11 [1991] 317–24). In 2006 Edmunds published another comprehensive monograph on Oedipus as a contribution to Routledge’s series “Gods and Heroes of the Ancient World.”

Another valuable work of scholarship on the reception of Oedipus’ figure and myth is Jane Davidson Reid, *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300–1990s* (New York 1993) 11: 754–62, and, more recently, Huhn/Vöhler (2010).

519 I borrowed this phrase from Edmunds’ 1985 book (see above), but in the context of my discourse I grant it a broader meaning, by using it to refer to any kind of re-elaboration, adaptation, revival, and rewriting of the overall story from antiquity to our days, in any artistic areas and/or scientific field.

As far as Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* is specifically concerned, the most recent works include: Paduano (1994), a very extensive survey of adaptations in the world literature (with an emphasis on the European one);⁵²⁰ Thomas Halter, *König Oedipus von Sophocles zu Cocteau* (Stuttgart 1998); Mitsytaka Odagiri, *Écritures palimpsests ou les théâtralisations françaises du mythe d'Oedipe* (Paris 2001), with a focus on the French theater from the 16th century to the present; Macintosh (2009); and Almut-Barbara Renger, *Oedipus and the Sphinx: The Threshold Myth from Sophocles through Freud to Cocteau* (Chicago, London 2013). Quick surveys are provided by Bettini/Guidorizzi (2004) 215–24; Sheehan (2012) 125–56; and Esposito (2014).

Among collections of essays analyzing different aspects and /or themes of the reception of this Sophoclean play, and ranging from antiquity to our days, mention should be made of Citti/Iannucci (2012), who also provide an extremely useful and up-to-date bibliographic list; and Pinotti/Stella (2013), who also supply an Italian translation of Ola Rotimi's adaptation, *The Gods Are Not To Blame*.⁵²¹

Selection of Further Readings (and Other Resources)

Literature

- Ahl, F. (2008) *Two Faces of Oedipus: Sophocles' Oedipus Tyrannus and Seneca' Oedipus*. (transl.) With an Introduction. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, esp. 1–40.
- Barberà, P. G. (2013) "Greek by Steven Berkoff (1980): the risky transformation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* into a love story," *Dionysus ex machina* IV (2013) 302–18.
- De Kock, E. L. (1961) "The sophoclean Oedipus and its antecedents," *Acta Classica* 4: 7–28.
- De Santis, V. (2014) "«Que le san de Laius a rempli son devoir». Note sulla presenza di *Edipo Re* in Corneille e nella tragedia francese del Seicento," in Mazzocut-Mis/Mormino (2014) 75–92.
- Gennari, A. (2014) "Edipus: Lo scarrozzante e Dionisio. Variazioni sul mito da Giovanni Testori," in Mazzocut-Mis/Mormino (2014) 183–94.
- Hall, E./Macintosh, F. (2005) "Revolutionary Oedipuses," in Hall/Macintosh (2005) *Greek Tragedy and the British Theatre 1660–1914*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 215–42.
- Jonson, A. W./Price-Williams, D. (1996) *Oedipus Ubiquitous. The Family Complex in World Folk Literature*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

⁵²⁰ There is also a shorter version of the almost encyclopedic book mentioned above, the version I mostly used for this work, i.e., Paduano (2008).

⁵²¹ About this adaptation, see above, 221–3.

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Oedipus at Colonus

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Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus dramatizes the final day of its titular character's life. When the tragedy begins, Oedipus, the former king of Thebes, and his daughter Antigone arrive in a secluded grove.¹ It is clear that they have been wandering on foot for a long while; although they perceive that they are close to the city of Athens, they do not know exactly where they are. After Antigone helps the blind and fatigued Oedipus sit on a rock in the grove, a man arrives and tells the pair that they have trespassed on ground sacred to the Eumenides (literally, "Kindly Ones"), the dreaded goddesses of the underworld who are also called Erinyes ("Furies"). The man urges father and daughter, whose identities he does not know, to leave the sanctuary, but Oedipus refuses, declaring that the place is one from which he will never depart. The whole territory, the man explains, is sacred to the god Poseidon; it is named after Colonus, the community's founder and eponymous hero, and is now governed by Athens' king Theseus.² Oedipus asks to meet with Theseus, claiming that he is able to confer a great benefit on the king and his

1 Edmunds (1996) 39–83 and van Nortwick (2015) 81–113 offer helpful reconstructions of Sophocles' dramaturgy and use of theatrical space in *Oedipus at Colonus*.

2 In the 5th century BC, the deme of Hippeios Colonus ("Colonus of the Horses") had long been incorporated into the citystate of Athens. Situated approximately a mile outside Athens' urban center, it was Sophocles' birthplace. The location in the deme of a sanctuary of Poseidon Hippeios ("Poseidon Lord of Horses"), which Sophocles represents as being near the sacred grove of the Eumenides (*Oedipus at Colonus* 888–9, 898, 1157–8), is attested by Thucydides 8. 67. 2 (late 5th century BC). Many scholars believe that the Eumenides' grove and Oedipus' grave were also historical landmarks, although perhaps not widely known landmarks, but others maintain that these sites are Sophocles' inventions. The existence of a hero cult of Oedipus in Colonus is attested by much later authors (Valerius Maximus 5. 3. 3 (1st century AD), Pausanias 1. 30. 4 (2nd century AD), but it is not clear that there was such a cult site in the 5th century BC, and Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* provides the first literary testament to an association of the Theban Oedipus with the deme of Colonus in Attica. See Edmunds (1981) and (1996) 87–101, Kelly (2009) 41–5, and Hesk (2012) 176–8 for overviews of scholarly controversies and speculations concerning the association of Oedipus with Colonus in the classical period (5th–4th centuries BC). Kelly and Hesk discuss the possibility that Sophocles "invented" a sanctuary of the Eumenides in Colonus in order to evoke two actual Oedipus cults: one at Colonus, associated with Demeter and Athena, and the other on the Areopagus hill in Athens, associated with the Eumenides.

city. But the man insists that he will first bring word to the local inhabitants, so that they can decide whether the wanderers will be permitted to stay in the grove or forced to leave. After the man's departure, Oedipus prays to the Eumenides, asking for their favor and affirming that Apollo had prophesied that their sacred precinct would offer him "rest" after long suffering, and that portents—earthquake, thunder, and lightning—would further guide him to his final resting place.³ Benefits, Oedipus asserts, will accrue to those who accept him at his death, but he adds that ruin will befall those who drove him out of his native city.

Upon arriving, the chorus of elderly men from Colonus demand that Oedipus leave his seat in the sacred grove. At Antigone's urging and with her help, Oedipus abandons the sacred rock and takes up a new seat, as the old men assure him of his safety in their midst. The chorus's curiosity quickly leads them to discover the visitors' identities, and to realize that the wretched man before them is the famous Oedipus, who killed his father Laius, the former king of Thebes, and married his mother Jocasta. The first impulse of the old men is to recoil in horror at the name of Oedipus; fearing that they will be harmed by the pollution of his terrible crimes of parricide and incest, they insist that he leave immediately despite their earlier welcome. Antigone and Oedipus struggle to convince them that Oedipus deserves special pity because he committed his crimes in ignorance and without the intention of causing harm. Oedipus also recalls Athens' reputation as a refuge for injured and helpless, and he asserts once again that, despite his wretched appearance, he is able to give great benefits to the community that receives him. With considerable reluctance, the old men agree to let their king determine how to respond to Oedipus' request for sanctuary.

At this moment, Antigone spies a new arrival—not Theseus, who has been summoned at the chorus's behest, but Oedipus' second daughter Ismene. Ismene brings terrible news from Thebes: Eteocles and Polyneices, Oedipus' sons, have fallen into a bitter dispute over the sovereignty of Thebes; the younger brother Eteocles has forced the elder Polyneices into exile, and Polyneices now travels

3 There were several traditions concerning the timing of Oedipus' death and the location of his grave; see Kamerbeek (1984) 2, Edmunds (1996) 95, and Kelly (2009) 37–9 for overviews. In the Homeric epics and other poetry dating to the archaic period (8th–6th centuries BC), as in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* (467 BC) and Sophocles' *Antigone* (late 440s BC), Oedipus is said to have died and been buried in Thebes before the war between his sons, Eteocles and Polyneices. At *Oedipus the King* 1436–7 (late 430s or early 420s BC), Sophocles has Oedipus beg Creon to exile him from Thebes, but the tragedy's final verses (1515–23) do not make it clear that Creon will grant his request. In Euripides' *Phoenician Women* (ca. 409 BCE), Oedipus survives his sons and tells Antigone at the end of the tragedy (1708–10) that Apollo had prophesied that he would go to Athens and die there. Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* is the first literary testament for Oedipus' death at Colonus.

from his new home in Argos with an army he has amassed so that he can attack his native city, drive his brother from power, and install himself as king.⁴ Ismene describes how Eteocles, prompted by the prophecy concerning the advantages that Oedipus' burial site will bestow on the territory that holds it, has dispatched Creon to retrieve Oedipus and settle him on Theban territory, but not in Thebes itself—Eteocles' goals are to ensure his victory over Polyneices, but also avoid pollution that might befall the city from the presence of the parricide within its walls.⁵ Outraged, Oedipus bitterly recalls how his sons did nothing when he was banished by the Thebans, and he calls on the gods to withhold victory from both.

Ismene is dispatched at the chorus's suggestion to offer atonement to the Eumenides for Oedipus' unwitting trespass into their sacred grove. Theseus arrives soon afterward, and Oedipus informs the Athenian king that hostilities between Athens and Thebes will be inevitable, but also promises that his burial site, if located on Athenian territory, will guarantee the Athenians success in their future military encounters with the Thebans. Convinced by Oedipus' prediction and promise, Theseus immediately grants him refuge, promising that Creon will never be permitted to force him to return to Thebes, and he then departs to attend to a sacrifice in honor of Poseidon. After the chorus sing an ode praising Colonus, Athens, and Poseidon, Creon arrives and pleads with Oedipus to return with him and thus save his native city from the attack of Polyneices' Argive army. Oedipus brusquely refuses, vowing that his sons will receive just enough of his land to be buried in. Creon attempts to compel Oedipus to return to Thebes with him by announcing that he has already had Ismene kidnapped; he then has his soldiers drag Antigone away. Although the soldiers depart with Antigone, the chorus detain Creon until the arrival of Theseus, who issues urgent orders for the sacrifice to be interrupted and a search party sent after the young women. Creon attempts to convince Theseus that it is unwise for Athens to harbor a criminal such as Oedipus; after Oedipus vigorously reasserts that his crimes were committed unwittingly and unwillingly, Theseus forces Creon to accompany him in search of Antigone and Ismene. The success anticipated by the chorus in their ensuing song is confirmed when their king returns with the kidnapped women and reunites them with Oedipus.

Theseus also brings news that, while returning to the grove, he encountered a suppliant at Poseidon's altar who asked to meet with Oedipus. Oedipus quickly surmises that the suppliant is Polyneices and refuses to meet him; Antigone,

4 In early poetry, the sons of Oedipus were likely twins; in *Phoenician Women* 71, Euripides identifies Polyneices as the younger brother. See Mastronarde (1994) 27 n. 3.

5 According to local Theban traditions, Oedipus was buried in Eteonos, a town in Boeotia. It is not clear whether Sophocles' audience would have been aware of this tradition. See Edmunds (1981) and (1996) 95; Kelly (2009) 41–2.

however, prevails on her father to yield. Polyneices is summoned and attempts to make common cause with Oedipus. He seeks his father's assistance in the attack on Thebes, claiming that they both have been driven into exile through Eteocles' machinations. But Oedipus is not mollified and insists that Polyneices and Eteocles bear equal responsibility for his banishment. Oedipus explicitly disowns his son and curses him along with his brother, vowing that they will die at each other's hands. Antigone's attempt to dissuade Polyneices from leading his army northward against Thebes fails, and Polyneices departs, resolved to die in his attack on Thebes.

Thunder is suddenly heard, and the chorus claim to see lightning. The old men fear that Zeus is about to kill them along with Oedipus, because they have harbored the parricide in their midst. But Oedipus recognizes the portents of his imminent death and asks for Theseus. Having exacted the king's promise to keep secret the precise location of his burial site, Oedipus leads Theseus, Antigone, and Ismene away. A messenger returns and tells the chorus about Oedipus' final moments—his ritual purification and donning of new garments, his farewell to his grieving daughters, the divine voice that calls out to him, and his miraculous disappearance. Antigone and Ismene return, lamenting their bereavement with the chorus. Theseus returns as well and attempts to honor his final promise to Oedipus, which was to protect and care for his daughters. Unable to comply with their request to visit their father's burial site, the king is also powerless to convince Oedipus' daughters to stay in Athens. As Antigone explains, she and her sister wish to return to Thebes in the hopes that they can prevent their brothers' deaths, and the Athenian king can do nothing but promise them safe passage back to Thebes.

In Literature

The second hypothesis for *Oedipus at Colonus*, preserved in the medieval manuscripts of Sophocles' dramas, indicates that the tragedy was posthumously staged in the Athenian Theater of Dionysus, with Sophocles' grandson and namesake serving as *didaskalos*.⁶ According to this hypothesis, Sophocles died in 406–405 BC, and *Oedipus at Colonus* was performed in the fourth year after his death, which would date its premiere to 402–401 BC, presumably at the Great Dionysia festival that was held every spring.

There is no external evidence for the tragedy's date of composition, and its text offers few certain clues. Oedipus' predictions concerning hostilities

6 The *didaskalos* performed a function akin to that of a modern director. The playwright usually, although not always, served as the *didaskalos* for his dramas.

between Athens and Thebes (*Oedipus at Colonus* 409–11, 616–23) are sufficiently general as to make it difficult to associate them with specific military engagements in the final years of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC).⁷ As neighboring city states, Thebes and Athens were at odds with each other throughout much of the 5th century BC, and so the prophecies Sophocles puts in Oedipus' mouth might have simply gestured in a general fashion toward the long-standing tensions between Athens and Thebes, which became intensified after the battles of Salamis (480 BC) and Plataea (479 BC) in the Persian Wars and were further aggravated during the Peloponnesian War, when the Thebans joined the Lacedaemonian alliance against the Athenians. According to the Greek historian Thucydides (late 5th century BC), the precinct of Poseidon Hippeios in Colonus was the meeting site in the spring of 411 BC for conspirators against Athens' democratic government, and it has been argued that the importance of Colonus in the failed oligarchic coup of 411–410 BC is one of the factors that spurred Sophocles to compose this tragedy concerning Oedipus' final day in Colonus.⁸ On this argument, 411 BC would be the *terminus post quem* for the tragedy's composition. Moreover, ancient anecdotes relate that, when his son Iophon attempted to have him declared legally incompetent due to senility, Sophocles proved his competence in court by reciting the beginning of the chorus's first stasimon in praise of Colonus, Athens, and Poseidon (*Oedipus at Colonus* 668–73).⁹ *Oedipus at Colonus* is represented in one of these reports as a work in progress, suggesting that, as far as some of

7 Kelly (2009) 15–7.

8 E.g. Edmunds (1996) 10 (cf. 87–92), who argues that the tragedy bears “a particular, apologetic relationship to the events that began in Colonus in 411 BCE,” and that Theseus' reception of Oedipus into Attica provides “models” of the conciliatory attitudes Sophocles wished his fellow citizens to adopt toward one another in the aftermath of the failed coup, when, under the restored democratic government, reprisals were taken against those implicated in the coup. Hesk (2012) 178 notes that Sophocles' narrative was “particularly pertinent” to the period immediately following the amnesty declared in 402 BC, after the failure of a second, bloodier oligarchic coup in 404–403—an amnesty that was guaranteed by “sworn pledges and oaths” like those given to Oedipus by Theseus in 1629–37. But this amnesty, which was instituted some years after Sophocles' death, could not have influenced the original conception of *Oedipus at Colonus*, although it may have given special resonance to the performance of the tragedy in the spring of 401. Kelly (2009) 20–5 surveys other kinds of “political readings” of *Oedipus at Colonus* (e.g., as a criticism of Athens' radical democracy), but cautions that “there are good reasons to think that it was largely not the intention of Athenian playwrights to make such comments at all.”

9 *Origin and Life of Sophocles* 13; Cicero, *De Senectute* (“On Old Age”) 7.22–3; Plutarch, *Moralia* 785A–B; Apuleius, *Apology* 37; pseudo-Lucian, *Macrobii* 24. The reception of *Oedipus at Colonus* in these texts is discussed more fully below, 336–9.

Sophocles' ancient biographers were concerned, the tragedy dates to the final years of his life. Although modern critics are generally skeptical of the factuality of these stories,¹⁰ the scholarly consensus today is that *Oedipus at Colonus* is one of the last, if not the very last, of Sophocles' extant tragedies, and that it was composed in the period between 411 and 406 BC and may postdate *Philoctetes*, which was first performed in 409 BC.¹¹

To most modern spectators and readers, *Oedipus at Colonus* is not as well known as the two other Sophoclean tragedies that treat the misfortunes of Oedipus and his family: *Antigone* (first performed in late 440s BC) and *Oedipus the King* (generally dated to the late 430s or early 420s).¹² Since the three tragedies were not performed at the same festival, they do not properly constitute a "trilogy," and one does not need to be familiar with either *Antigone* or *Oedipus the King* in order to appreciate the much later *Oedipus at Colonus*.¹³ Nonetheless, the action of *Oedipus at Colonus* clearly looks back to what is dramatized in *Oedipus the King*: i.e., Oedipus' discovery of his identity and the severe punishment he inflicts on himself when he realizes that he has killed his father and fathered children with his mother.¹⁴ It also "anticipates" the events of *Antigone*, in which Antigone pays with her life for defying Creon's edict prohibiting the performance of funerary rites for Polyneices, who killed and was killed by his brother Eteocles in battle. All three tragedies explore the paradoxes of human knowledge and ignorance through the metaphor of physical vision and blindness; one of the great ironies of *Oedipus at Colonus* is that Oedipus,

10 E.g., Tyrrell (2006) 186; Scodel (2012) 36; cf. Fowler (1936) 87 note b.

11 Kelly (2009) 16–18.

12 Oedipus and the members of his troubled family were familiar figures from the epic and lyric poetry of the archaic period (8th–6th centuries BC). Nonetheless, the direct debts of *Oedipus at Colonus* to the epic tradition and to lyric poems such as Stesichorus' *Thebaid* (6th century BC) appear relatively few, given that, in these early treatments, the place of Oedipus' death is either Thebes or elsewhere in Boeotia. See e.g. Edmunds (1996) 95 and Kamerbeek (1984) 2, who notes, "Nowhere in our texts of Greek literature do we meet a version of the myth in which Oedipus is driven (or goes) into exile before the war of the Seven (as is presupposed in *OC*)." Following the epic tradition, *Seven Against Thebes*, the surviving play of Aeschylus' *Oedipeia* tetralogy, represents Oedipus as having died in Thebes before Polyneices attacks the city. But some features of Aeschylus' treatment, such as its emphases on the curse Oedipus calls down on his sons (*Seven Against Thebes* 655, 709, 724–5), may have influenced the conception of *Oedipus at Colonus*.

13 See, for example, Hesk (2012) 185.

14 For more thorough examinations of the relationship between Sophocles' two Oedipus plays, see Seidensticker (1972), Markantonatos (2007) 195–230, Kelly (2009) 45–51, and Hesk (2012) 185–9.

now blind and physically helpless, takes on the role of the sightless seer Teiresias, whom his younger self scorns in *Oedipus the King* 330–462, and who reveals unwelcome truths to Creon in *Antigone* 988–1090. In important ways, then, *Oedipus at Colonus* is a work of reception—perhaps “self-reception”—in its own right. To outline the features that have made Sophocles’ final “Theban tragedy” resonate with later poets, playwrights, musicians, artists, and adapters, we might begin by reviewing a few of the debts that *Oedipus at Colonus* owes not only to his *Antigone* and *Oedipus the King*, but also to other tragedies that put Athens and its mythical kings on stage.

Central aspects of Oedipus’ characterization, such as his great capacity for anger (*Oedipus at Colonus* 592, 855, 1348–96) and equally great affection for his daughters (344–52, 445–7), foster an impression of continuity between Sophocles’ two Oedipus tragedies. His reticence about disclosing his name to the chorus (204–23) perhaps recalls, by virtue of the contrast it creates, the relentlessness with which this same character had sought to disclose the truth about himself in *Oedipus the King*.¹⁵ Moreover, Oedipus’ anger at Eteocles, Polyneices, and Creon for their complicity in his banishment from Thebes (*Oedipus at Colonus* 421–44, 589–605, 760–90, 1354–64) is carefully reconciled with the fact that, in *Oedipus the King* 1436–57 and 1518–9, such banishment is exactly what Oedipus himself seeks from Creon, knowing full well that, in his blind and vulnerable state, exile from the city will mean certain death. In *Oedipus at Colonus* 433–6, Oedipus attributes his initial desire for exile and death to the “boiling over” of his temper on the day of his terrible discovery; with time, however, he came to realize that the penalty he had already imposed on himself—his self-blinding—was “too great a punisher” of the crimes he had unwittingly committed (437–9; cf. 768).¹⁶ It was at this point, however, that the city expelled him, and Eteocles and Polyneices did nothing to prevent the people of Thebes from driving their former king into exile (440–4).¹⁷

Antigone and Ismene’s decision to return to Thebes in *Oedipus at Colonus* 1768–72, despite Theseus’ offer to let them live in Athens, creates a bridge to the action of *Antigone*, as does Polyneices’ request that his sisters perform funerary rites for him when he dies (1405–10). In addition, Antigone’s tenderness toward Polyneices and her desperate effort to dissuade him from marching against

15 Cf. Hesk (2012) 186.

16 In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus insists several times that he killed Laius and married Jocasta in ignorance and therefore involuntarily (265–74, 525–6, 547–8, 960–1001). These mitigating circumstances are of no concern to Oedipus in *Oedipus the King*.

17 In *Oedipus at Colonus* 770–1 and 1355–7, however, Oedipus affixes blame for his banishment directly on Creon and Polyneices.

Thebes (1414–46) anticipate the affection she posthumously lavishes on him in *Antigone*. Indeed, *Oedipus at Colonus* affords a poignant perspective on the events of *Antigone*, because it shows how Antigone's death in *Antigone* is made inevitable by the two men who are dearest to her—the father who dooms her as well as her brothers with his curse, and the brother who refuses to turn away from a fight he cannot win.¹⁸

Oedipus at Colonus also bears significant affinities to “suppliant tragedies,” notably two extant plays by Euripides, *Children of Heracles* (ca. 430 BC) and *Suppliant Women* (ca. 423 BC).¹⁹ In both of these plays, Attica is represented as a place of refuge for individuals who have been victimized by the actions of the rulers of other city-states (Thebes in *Suppliant Women*, Argos in *Children of Heracles*).²⁰ In both, the Athenian king (Theseus in *Suppliant Women*, his son Demophon in *Children of Heracles*) is petitioned by vulnerable suppliants (the mothers of Polyneices' dead comrades in *Suppliant Women*, Heracles' children (along with their grandmother Alcmene and kinsman Iolaus) in *Children of Heracles*), and, with the permission of the Athenian people, he leads a military expedition against the offending city-state. The battles in both tragedies are decisively won by the Athenians, who are thus able to redress the wrongs suffered by the suppliants and protect them from further harm. Although Sophocles' plot differs in some regards from these particular Euripidean tragedies,²¹ the resemblances are strong enough to make it plausible to think that suppliant dramas such as *Children of Heracles* and *Suppliant Women* may have exerted some influence on the conception of *Oedipus at Colonus*.²²

18 As Hesk (2012) 184 observes, “These unmistakable evocations [in *Oedipus at Colonus* 1399–1413] of the love and obligations which bring about Antigone's death in Sophocles' earlier play *Antigone* spell out the terrible costs of Oedipus' desire to satisfy his anger through retribution.”

19 Burian (1974) 409–10; Hesk (2012) 180. Other extant “suppliant dramas” are Aeschylus' *Suppliants* (ca. 463 BC, set in Argos) and *Eumenides* (458 BC, set in Athens).

20 Zeitlin (1990) discusses the representations of Thebes, Argos, and Athens in 5th-century Athenian drama.

21 For example, neither Oedipus nor Antigone uses the formal gestures of supplication (e.g., they do not prostrate themselves or clasp Theseus' knees). Sophocles' Theseus does not go to war with the Thebans, and he does not consult the Athenian people before offering aid to Oedipus; Oedipus comes to Colonus with the intention of dying there (rather than having his life preserved), and he offers the Athenians a concrete boon in return for their protection.

22 Burian (1974) 410; Hesk (2012) 180–1. The characterization of Theseus in *Oedipus at Colonus* is also anticipated (and perhaps influenced) by Euripides' *Heracles* (ca. 420 BC). In *Heracles* 1163–418, Theseus comes to Thebes to aid the despondent protagonist, who

In particular, Creon in *Oedipus in Colonus* seems modeled on the arrogant herald who attempts to assert the prerogatives of the Argive king Eurystheus in *Children of Heracles* 55–288 and also the haughty Theban messenger who challenges Theseus in *Suppliant Women* 399–597. Euripides' Argive herald is emboldened to seize one of Heracles' children, and so, too, Sophocles' Creon does not hesitate to use physical force to drag Antigone and Oedipus away from their sanctuary (*Oedipus at Colonus* 844–75). Like these two envoys, Creon is eventually put in his place by the Athenian king; moreover, as is the case with Eurystheus' messenger in *Children of Heracles*, the feisty chorus of Athenians play a major role in foiling Creon's effort to coerce Oedipus.

But Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus* is not merely a helpless suppliant, seeking protection from Theseus and the men of Colonus. He is able to offer the Athenians a concrete reward in exchange for their welcome and thus has more to bargain with than Heracles' children and the Argive matrons in the Euripidean tragedies. Moreover, he himself is petitioned for help first by Creon, on behalf of Eteocles and the people of Thebes, and then by Polyneices.²³ The tension between Oedipus' two roles—abject, helpless suppliant on the one hand, and potential savior on the other—is at the core of the dramatic dynamic in this long and textured yet tightly organized tragedy, which creates momentum and tension by developing a series of juxtapositions of characters, situations, and moods. There are three great “movements” in *Oedipus at Colonus*, each centering on a crisis that exposes Oedipus' vulnerability and is precipitated by the arrival of a figure from abroad: at first Ismene, who comes from Thebes with news of Eteocles and Creon's machinations; then Creon himself, who attempts to compel Oedipus to return home; and lastly Polyneices,

has killed his children in a fit of divinely imposed madness. The tragedy concludes with Theseus escorting Heracles to his new home in Athens. Both Sophocles and Euripides wrote tragedies titled *Theseus* (now lost), and it is possible that *Oedipus at Colonus* is indebted to them as well. For a discussion of the affinities between *Oedipus at Colonus* and the papyrus fragments of a *Theseus* tragedy that may be Sophocles', see Eucken (1979). In Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, which was performed just a few years before Sophocles' death, Creon forces Oedipus and Antigone into exile after the deaths of Eteocles and Polyneices (1590–682), and Oedipus tells Antigone that he is destined to go to Athens and die there (1708–10). Scholars dispute the authenticity of these verses: see e.g. Kamerbeek (1984) 2. Even if they are genuinely Euripidean, it is impossible to ascertain whether Sophocles owed any aspect of his conception of Oedipus in Attica to *Phoenician Women*.

- 23 Burian (1974) 410–1; Hesk (2012) 180. The double petitioning of Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus* may look back to *Oedipus the King* 1–150, in which the Theban priest of Zeus, surrounded by suppliants, seeks the king's help in bringing an end to the plague that ravages the city.

who tries to enlist his father as his ally. Each of these movements culminates in an appearance by Theseus, who ensures that Oedipus' wishes are respected and thereby increases his autonomy until the blind man, no longer in need of a guide, is able to take lead in his last journey. And each movement is capped by a choral song celebrating the gods who protect Athens and Colonus (in particular, Poseidon, Athena, and the Eumenides) and praying for their continued goodwill.²⁴ The messenger's description of Oedipus' final moments and Theseus' farewell to Antigone and Ismene create a coda for the tragedy, entwining the competing moods of hopefulness and despair that have been developed all along. For, even though Oedipus himself is able to transcend the violent troubles of his family thanks to the help he receives from Antigone, Ismene, and Theseus,²⁵ his curse on Polyneices and Eteocles makes it impossible for any of his children to do the same.²⁶

Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus* is thus a paradoxical figure in a paradoxical situation—abject and vulnerable, yet powerful in his ability to confer protection to those who receive him in death, kind and tender to his daughters, yet savage to his sons and Creon, wise yet ignorant (especially concerning the consequences of his curse for his beloved daughters), simultaneously aware of his guilt yet insistent on his innocence, regretful but not remorseful, isolated and unique and potentially dangerous, but also a vital contributor to his newly found community, intransigent and also transformed. He is a commanding figure as well, present on stage until the tragedy's final 220 verses. It is consequently no surprise that, in virtually all of the works influenced by this long and eventful tragedy, the character and situation of Oedipus himself are among the chief sources of inspiration, providing an abundance of raw material for later adaptors, who can pick and choose which aspects to emphasize and

24 Nooter (2012) 152–6 analyzes the ways in which the chorus's songs define the grove and set "expectations" for "Oedipus' experience there."

25 At the beginning of *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus replicates his acts of transgression with his parents by trespassing in the grove of the Eumenides. Ismene, however, is permitted to atone for this transgression on his behalf.

26 See Hesk (2012) 180–1. At first, the tragedy perhaps tempts spectators to see the figures who shape Oedipus' last day in starkly opposed terms: the loyal daughters vs. the disloyal sons, the noble Theseus vs. the ignoble Creon, the blind Oedipus vs. the sighted male figures who control his fate. But the oppositions become complicated, especially with Polyneices' arrival. In his father's eyes, Polyneices is indistinguishable from Eteocles—hence his curse on both of his sons. But Polyneices' supplication contrasts with Creon's cavalier brutality, and Oedipus' harsh rejection of his son contrasts with the welcome he received from Theseus and also recalls the chorus's initial rebuff of his own request for asylum.

develop, and which to leave aside: the abjection and vulnerability, the ferocity, the awareness, the ignorance, the isolation, the generosity, the intransigence, the dangerousness, or the affection. Other figures of interest are the doggedly attentive Antigone, who repeatedly tries to moderate her father's temper, the pathetic (possibly manipulative) Polyneices, and also Theseus, whose decision to offer asylum to Oedipus has military and political consequences for his city. The opening scene, where Oedipus and Antigone first appear by themselves in the Eumenides' sanctuary, and the dread-inspiring cursing of Polyneices are among the play's most frequently "quoted" moments. The tragedy's main themes, which develop around the paradoxes of Oedipus—knowledge and ignorance, estrangement and reconciliation, transgression and atonement, the problems of ascertaining what is and is not advantageous in long and short terms—also afford much inspiration to those who have taken *Oedipus at Colonus* as a point of departure for their own works.

Among non-dramatic literary texts, the earliest extant reception of *Oedipus at Colonus* is a biographical anecdote concerning Sophocles that is related by the Roman orator and statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC).²⁷ Similar anecdotes are presented in the works of the Greek essayist and biographer Plutarch (ca. 45–120 AD), the philosopher and novelist Apuleius (ca. 125–170 AD), who hailed from northern Africa and wrote in Latin, and also in a work written in Greek preserved in the corpus of the Syrian sketch-writer Lucian of Samosata (ca. 125–180 AD), as well as in the ancient *Origin and Life of Sophocles* transmitted in the medieval manuscripts of Sophocles.²⁸ All of the anecdotes plainly derive from biographical writings of the Hellenistic period (late 4th–2nd centuries BC), as does the entire *Origin and Life of Sophocles*. In the essays of Cicero, Plutarch, and pseudo-Lucian, the anecdotes concerning Sophocles are used to defend the proposition that old men, even extremely old men, can retain their mental acumen.

27 Cicero, *De Senectute* ("On Old Age") 7. 22–3. Cicero has his brother Quintus express admiration for *Oedipus at Colonus* in *On the Ends of Good and Evil* (*De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*) 5. 1; see Holford-Strevens (1999) 229–30.

28 Plutarch, *Moralia* 785A–B (in an essay titled *Whether Old Men Should Participate in Political Affairs*); Apuleius, *Apology* 37; pseudo-Lucian, *Macrobii* (i.e., *Long Lives*) 24; *Origin and Life of Sophocles* 13. Holford-Strevens (1999) 236 notes that the Roman author Valerius Maximus (8.7. ext. 12), writing in the 1st century AD, "suppresses all mention of the law-suit." The text of the *Origin and Life of Sophocles* is available in Radt (1977) 29–40 and Lloyd-Jones (1990) xviii–xxi; text and English translation are available in Tyrrell (2006) 217–26. The biographical tradition is discussed in the chapter on Sophocles' life in this volume (see above, 1–24).

The common thread in all five sources is that, in the last years of his life, Sophocles was legally charged with senile dementia. To demonstrate his mental competence, he either read or recited *Oedipus at Colonus*; his judges—identified as the members of his phratry in the *Origin and Life*—were so impressed by the quality of the tragedy's composition that they immediately dismissed the case. Details in the anecdotes differ, as do their levels of specificity. Pseudo-Lucian and the *Origin and Life* identify the individual who brought the suit as Sophocles' son Iophon, himself a tragic playwright. Cicero claims that the suit was instigated by "sons" in the plural, out of concern for their father's neglect of the family's affairs; in contrast, the *Origin and Life* relates that Iophon was jealous of Sophocles' preference for his grandson and namesake Sophocles, who is identified as the child of Iophon's half-brother Ariston.²⁹ Whereas most of the accounts do not specify the passages Sophocles recited to the judges in order to demonstrate that he was still mentally competent, Plutarch states that the tragedian read out the chorus's second stasimon (*Oedipus at Colonus* 668–719), which praises the natural wonders of his native deme Colonus and celebrates the favor bestowed on it by the gods. Though incorrectly labeling this song as "the parodos" (i.e., the ode sung by the chorus when first entering the orchestra), Plutarch quotes 668–73 in full:

εὐίππου, ξένε, τᾶσδε χώ-
 ρας ἴκου τὰ κράτιστα γᾶς ἔπαυλα,
 τὸν ἀργῆτα Κολωνόν, ἔνθ'
 ἀλίγεια μινύρεται
 θαμίζουσα μάλιστ' ἀη-
 δῶν χλωραῖς ὑπὸ βάσσαις

670

In this country of fine horses, stranger, you have come to the choicest rural dwellings, to white Colonus, where the melodious nightingale most likes to stay and sing her song beneath the green glades.³⁰

According to Plutarch and Apuleius, Sophocles' performance elicited adulation from his judges; according to Apuleius and the account preserved in the pseudo-Lucianic *Macrobiū*, the judges were so impressed with what they heard of *Oedipus at Colonus* that they leveled a charge of dementia against the tragedian's accusers, or were tempted to do so.

29 This is the younger Sophocles who served as *didaskalos* for *Oedipus at Colonus* according to the tragedy's second hypothesis.

30 The translation is that of Lloyd-Jones (1994) 493.]

The *Origin and Life* and other biographical writings represent Sophocles' long life as a happy one, free of the professional and personal troubles that, according to ancient sources, vexed Euripides.³¹ Thus the anecdotes describing how the elderly tragedian was compelled to legally defend himself against his son(s) in his final years seem at odds with other details in the accounts of his life, and modern critics have concluded that these stories about the suit instigated by the tragedian's son(s) are apocryphal. This conclusion has in turn spurred scholarly interest in speculating about the stories' origins.³² Two intriguing theories posit *Oedipus at Colonus* itself as the source of the anecdotes. According to one theory, ancient interpreters found it difficult to imagine that the "gloomy treatment of old age" in *Oedipus at Colonus* could have been authored by a man as content and fortunate as Sophocles was supposed to have been.³³ These ancient interpreters accordingly assumed that the depiction of Oedipus' bitter relationship with his sons and, in particular, Oedipus' cursing of Polyneices in *Oedipus at Colonus* 1383–96, arose from Sophocles' personal experiences of estrangement from his own son(s), thereby giving rise to the tale about the tragedian forced into court and reciting from the very tragedy that the tale had been formulated to explain.³⁴ A second theory is that a comedy produced in the decades after Sophocles' death, perhaps when his son Iophon was still active in the theater,³⁵ humorously depicted Sophocles' family embroiled in a legal dispute that evoked the clash between father and sons in *Oedipus at Colonus*, with Iophon taking on the role of Polyneices

31 See Stevens (1956) 89; Knöbl (2008) 237. The biography transmitted in the manuscripts of Euripides, titled *Origin and Life of Euripides*, explicitly contrasts the difficulties experienced by Euripides with the happy life led by Sophocles (34).

32 As Scodel (2012) 36 puts it, "[t]he tale is profoundly unlikely"; cf. Edmunds (1996) 163. Jebb (1889) xl–xlii cogently argues for doubting the veracity of the story, but notes, "There was nothing impossible in the incident supposed. The legal phrase used by the Greek authorities [i.e., the term *παράνοιας δίκη* ("a charge of incompetence"), used by Plutarch and pseudo-Lucian] is correct, describing an action which could be, and sometimes was, brought by Athenian sons against their fathers. As to the recitation, a jury of some hundreds of citizens in an Athenian law-court formed a body to which such a *coup de théâtre* could be addressed with great effect."

33 Scodel (2012) 36.

34 Scodel (2012) 36; cf. Leftkowitz (1981) 84–5; Holford-Strevens (1999) 229 n. 26.

35 Tyrrell (2012) 36 speculates, however, that Iophon may have not outlived his father by long, and that this is the reason why "the younger, less experienced Sophocles produced *Oedipus at Colonus*."

and Sophocles as a beleaguered Oedipus-like figure.³⁶ Ancient biographers are notorious for interpreting too literally the pseudo-biographical information they discovered in comedies,³⁷ and so, according to this hypothesis, the comic fiction of Sophocles' legal troubles with his sons, which would have originally been presented as a playful *reductio ad absurdum* of the plot of *Oedipus at Colonus*, became absorbed as "fact" into the biographical tradition. This ingenious theory posits an intermediary step between *Oedipus at Colonus* and its reception into the biographical writings about Sophocles' life—i.e., a now lost comedy—whereas the first theory argues for the tragedy's direct influence on the biographical tradition.

The struggles of Oedipus' family were plainly popular subjects in epic and other forms of poetry throughout antiquity. We know that several epic poems titled *Thebaid*, written in Greek and possibly also Latin, were composed in the centuries following Sophocles' death in 406 BC,³⁸ including the Greek epic by Antimachus (ca. 400 BC), which would have been roughly contemporaneous with the first performance of *Oedipus at Colonus* in Athens' Theater of Dionysus. But, because of the fragmentary remains of these poems and the scantiness of ancient testimonia about them, we cannot assess their debts to this Sophoclean tragedy. Two famous Latin works concerning the war between Eteocles and Polyneices, the tragedy *Phoenician Women* by the Roman philosopher and dramatist Lucius Annaeus Seneca (ca. 2 BC–65 AD) and the epic poem *Thebaid* by Publius Papinius Statius (ca. 45–96 AD), clearly derive some inspiration from *Oedipus at Colonus*. But in both works the debts to Euripidean tragedies such as *Phoenician Women* (ca. 410 BC) and *Suppliant Women* (ca. 423 BC) are much more obvious and extensive,³⁹ and modern scholars

36 Jebb (1889) xli-xlii; Tyrrell (2006) 186 and (2012) 36–7. In his discussion of how Sophocles came to be posthumously associated with his Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus*, Edmunds (1996) 165–8 suggests that, if there was a comedy concerning legal troubles between Sophocles and his sons, its author might have derived inspiration for his plot from an actual court appearance that the elderly tragedian made as a witness in a trial.

37 Tyrrell (2006) 186 asserts that the Greek Peripatetic philosopher Satyrus of Calliatis (late 3rd century BCE), cited in the *Origin and Life of Sophocles* as the source for information about Sophocles' trial, "was given to finding biography in the fantasies of comedians." But it may not fair to single out Satyrus, of whose works only fragments survive, for this criticism. Knöbl (2008) 134–88 argues that the philosopher in fact challenged the simplistic approaches to composing biographies favored by his contemporaries.

38 Bulloch (1989) 67; Hutchinson (2013) 298 n. 8.

39 On Seneca's and Statius's reception of these Euripidean tragedies, see Lauriola (2015) 331–4 and Scharffenberger (2015) 299–302.

have raised questions about the degree of Sophocles' influence on Seneca and Statius.

Seneca's *Phoenician Women* (ca. 65 AD) appears incomplete. It lacks choral songs, which figure significantly in other extant Senecan tragedies, and there is no reference to a chorus (or to women from Phoenicia) in the text that we have; moreover, the shifts of scene are abrupt and unmotivated.⁴⁰ The drama's first section (1–362) depicts Oedipus wandering in voluntary exile through the wilderness of Mount Cithaeron, followed by Antigone. Oedipus wishes only to die and has no thoughts about the welfare of any individual or group; he knows of his sons' dispute over the sovereignty of Thebes and predicts its deadly conclusion (273–87), but at no point does he curse Eteocles and Polyneices outright.⁴¹ He nonetheless bitterly condemns the young men at length, while also dwelling on the crimes he unwittingly committed. When a messenger arrives to convince him to return to Thebes and try to make peace between the warring brothers, Oedipus resists his appeals as well as those of Antigone, and refuses to return (288–362). A sudden shift of scene, from Cithaeron to Thebes, marks the beginning of the second section (363–442). An attendant tells Oedipus' wife Jocasta about her sons' impending combat (387–402); Jocasta quickly departs for the battlefield at the urging of Antigone, who is now present in Thebes, although no explanation of how she left her father and returned to the city is offered (403–26). In another sudden shift, Jocasta stands between Eteocles and Polyneices on the battlefield and attempts to convince them to reconcile with one another (427–664). The text breaks off in the middle of verbal sparring between Eteocles and Polyneices, which sidelines Jocasta's peace-making efforts.

The debts to Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, especially in the second section, are patent.⁴² The first section, in which Antigone accompanies Oedipus as he wanders outside the city, evokes in a general fashion the situation of Oedipus and Antigone in *Oedipus at Colonus*.⁴³ It is possible to detect in the Senecan Oedipus' first verses, addressed to Antigone, *caeca parentis regimen et*

40 Frank (1995) 3–16 and (2014) 452–3; Mueller-Goldingen (1995) 83–4; Fitch (2002) 275. Tarrant (1978) 262 accounts for the apparent incompleteness of Seneca's *Phoenician Women* by suggesting that the text "might represent an experiment in a new form of dramatic poetry," but Frank (2014) 453 expresses reservations concerning "Tarrant's hypothesis that the play is complete as it stands."

41 Frank (1995) 26.

42 Frank (1995) 21–5; Mueller-Goldingen (1995) 85–92; Fitch (2002) 279; Scharffenberger (2015) 299–300.

43 Mueller-Goldingen (1995) 84–5.

fessi unicum/patris levamen, nata ("Guidance for your blind parent, only solace for your weary father, my daughter,"⁴⁴ 1–2) an echo the opening address of Sophocles' protagonist, τέκνον τυφλοῦ γέροντος Ἀντιγόνη ("Child of a blind old man, Antigone," 1).⁴⁵ More broadly, Antigone's loyalty to her father and refusal to abandon him (e.g., 51–61), as well as her efforts to persuade him to moderate his passionate reactions (e.g., 77–9), recall the conduct of Sophocles' Antigone. The intense anger Oedipus feels toward his sons (e.g., 295–306, 352–3) likewise evokes *Oedipus at Colonus*.

Yet some recent scholarship has emphasized "the great differences, amounting to complete reversals, in the locale and its significance, and in the meaning of Oedipus' desire to end his life."⁴⁶ Seneca's Oedipus and Antigone are not on a journey to Athens, guided by Apollo's prophecy; rather, at Oedipus' whim they wander in the mountainous wilderness outside Thebes. Antigone does not guide her father's steps, but follows him in a seemingly vain attempt to protect him from his own self-destructive impulses. There is no encounter with Ismene in Seneca's tragedy, nor with Theseus, Creon, and Polyneices. Unlike Sophocles' Oedipus, who is banished from Thebes against his will and learns of the imminent war between his sons only after arriving in Colonus, Seneca's Oedipus has chosen to exile himself and seek death in the mountains because of his sons' enmity against one another (*Phoenician Women* 304–6). In general, the suicidal fury of the Senecan character seems far removed from the attitude of his Sophoclean counterpart, who despite his misfortunes is able to comprehend the interests of others, especially those of Theseus and the Athenians who offer him refuge. Both Sophocles and Seneca depict Oedipus as refusing to comply with requests to involve himself in his sons' fight, but the motivations in each case appear different. In Sophocles, Oedipus is asked to take sides, first by Creon on behalf of Eteocles, and then by Polyneices; having been mistreated by both parties, he rejects both requests. In Seneca, however, the messenger who seeks to escort Oedipus back to Thebes is a non-partisan emissary of the people, who desperately wish him to intervene and prevent the war (*Phoenician Women* 320–7; cf. 347–9). As a consequence, Oedipus' dismissal of this appeal, culminating in his wish to "let the city be cremated" (346), seems irresponsible and self-indulgent.

44 The translation is that of Fitch (2002) 282.

45 Mueller-Goldingen (1995) 85; Frank (1995) 19.

46 Fitch (2002) 279; cf. Frank (1995) 19 and (2014) 456, who states, "... the surface similarities between Sophocles' *Oedipus Coloneus* and Seneca's *Phoenissae* amount to very little when subjected to close scrutiny and it is possible that Seneca had no more than a general awareness of the Greek play."

It is impossible to tell whether these departures from Sophocles' treatment of Oedipus' exile from Thebes are Seneca's innovations or are derived from intermediary sources.⁴⁷ That Seneca derived some inspiration, directly or indirectly, from Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, seems uncontroversial. It is also probably fair to say that Sophocles' tragedy was of limited use to him, given that his principal interest in the two extant sections of *Phoenician Women* is to highlight the differences between Oedipus' and Jocasta's responses to the disaster threatened by their sons' imminent war.⁴⁸ To that end, Seneca's Oedipus is a more self-absorbed and fatalistic figure than the protagonist of *Oedipus at Colonus*.

The first six books of Statius' *Thebaid*, generally dated to ca. 80–92 AD, describe the events that bring Polyneices and his Argive army to the walls of Thebes; the war itself and its aftermath are the subjects of books 7–12. Following Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, Statius keeps both Oedipus and Antigone in Thebes, and he also has Jocasta live long enough to try to prevent her sons' single combat (11. 634–47).⁴⁹ The subsequent action is loosely inspired by Euripides' *Phoenician Women* as well: after the deaths of Eteocles and Polyneices, Antigone leads Oedipus to the battlefield, where he laments over the corpses of his sons and repents the curse he had leveled against them (11. 580–633); now ruler of Thebes, Creon expels Oedipus from the city to the wilds of Mount Cithaeron, to the great consternation of the Theban people (11. 648–756). Antigone later returns to the battlefield and performs rites for the unburied Polyneices, evoking her counterpart in Sophocles' *Antigone* (12. 349–463). She is joined in this task, however, by Polyneices' wife Argia, who has journeyed on foot to Thebes from Argos, having encouraged the other wives and mothers of the slain Argives to go to Athens, so that they can appeal to the Athenian king Theseus for help in persuading or forcing Creon and the Thebans to permit the burial of their dead (12. 105–348).⁵⁰ This appeal and the successful military expedition that Theseus mounts to retrieve the bodies of the fall Argive leaders (12. 481–809) are modeled, albeit with significant alterations, on the action of Euripides' *Suppliant Women*.⁵¹ Unlike Euripides,

47 Frank (2014) 456–7; following Tarrant (1978), Frank underscores that Seneca may well have been influenced as much by “Roman authors, Roman socio-political trends, and Roman literary trends” as by any Greek model.

48 Fitch (2002) 276–8; Frank (2014) 453–4.

49 E.g., Heslin (2008) 111; cf. Scharffenberger (2015) 300–2.

50 Heslin (2008) 117–8 presents a detailed analysis of Argia's involvement in the burial of Polyneices and her “competition” with Antigone.

51 Lauriola (2015) 331–4.

however, Statius has Theseus meet Creon on the battlefield and kill him (12. 752–81).

In virtually no place does the plot of *Thebaid* correspond with that of *Oedipus at Colonus*, and one might accordingly suppose that the Sophoclean tragedy had no influence on Statius' conception of his epic. Moreover, Statius' Oedipus, who is "psychologically illuminated by resentment," has little in common with the protagonist of Sophocles' drama.⁵² It is true that both figures curse their sons, but Sophocles' Oedipus is provoked to do so only gradually.⁵³ In contrast, "Statius does not give prominence to any harsh or unfeeling treatment that Oedipus may have suffered from his sons . . . the grim truth is that Oedipus is aggrieved as much by his loss of kingship as by blindness . . . [h]is whole being has become dehumanized and twisted," and the curse on Eteocles and Polyneices is one that Statius' Oedipus "rightly recognizes" as perverse.⁵⁴ It seems reasonable to conclude that "[t]he Oedipus of the *Thebaid* is the Senecan Oedipus"—i.e., the Oedipus of Seneca's *Oedipus* as well as *Phoenician Women*—rather than the Oedipus of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*.⁵⁵

It has been convincingly demonstrated, however, that there are significant, if subtle, echoes of *Oedipus at Colonus* in books 11 and 12 of the *Thebaid*.⁵⁶ When Creon forces Oedipus into exile, the latter asks, "Does it matter where I convey my blindness and lingering death?" (11. 696–7)—a question that perfectly captures "the dramatic crux" of *Oedipus at Colonus*, as it imagines Oedipus "anticipating" the events of Sophocles' tragedy.⁵⁷ Sophocles' plot is also anticipated by the description of the Athenian altar of clemency, where Theseus receives the suppliant wives and mothers of the Argive warriors. We are told that the altar had already become a famous place of refuge for the defeated and exiled, and that "the welcoming sanctuary later mastered the furies of Oedipus" (*mox hospita sedes/ vicit et Oedipodae Furias*, 12. 509–10), a detail that identifies Athens as Oedipus' final resting place and, moreover, hints at the close association of Oedipus with the Eumenides in *Oedipus at*

52 Vessey (1973) 73.

53 *Oedipus at Colonus* 337–56, 740–60, 1284–1345.

54 Vessey (1973) 73–5, in discussing Statius' description of Oedipus' curse and its motivations in *Thebaid* 1. 46–88.

55 Vessey (1973) 72.

56 Heslin (2008) esp. 112–4 and 120–8.

57 Heslin (2008) 112–3 notes as well that Creon's decision to banish Oedipus to Mount Cithaeron (11. 750–2) looks back not only at Seneca's *Phoenician Women*, in which Oedipus has voluntarily banished himself to Cithaeron, but also at *Oedipus at Colonus*, in which Eteocles and Creon seek to keep Oedipus in Theban territory, but do not wish him to set foot inside the city itself (*Oedipus at Colonus* 399–400, 784–6).

Colonus.⁵⁸ Although the war the Athenians wage against the Thebans is modeled on the battle described in Euripides' *Suppliant Women*, Theseus' quick decision to take up the cause of his Argive suppliants, which precludes consultation with his citizens or implementation of the machinery of democracy (12. 598–610), evokes the speedy decision-making of Sophocles' king, who unilaterally confers citizenship on Oedipus, and not the hesitations and vacillations of the Euripidean character.⁵⁹ The battlefield encounter of Theseus and Creon, unparalleled in Euripides' *Suppliant Women*, finds a precedent in their hostile meeting in *Oedipus at Colonus* 887–1043. In Sophocles, Theseus bests Creon with words, not in combat, as he compels the Theban to help him recover Ismene and Antigone (1019–35). Nonetheless, the threat of physical violence hangs over their interaction (934–6).⁶⁰ When meeting his opponent in battle, Statius' Creon taunts Theseus, newly victorious in his war against the Amazons, by telling him, "Your fight here is not with girls carrying shields, and don't think that these hands are those of a maiden" (12. 761–2). The insult arguably looks back to one that "Sophocles' Creon had diplomatically declined to make" when he refused to call the city of Athens "unmanly" (939).⁶¹

In the 1st century AD, Rome's emperors were hardly proponents of democracy, and we might reasonably conclude that Statius, by having his Theseus wield power like his compassionate yet autocratic forebear in Sophocles, sought to supply the emperor Domitian with a meaningful role model and an "avatar for the Imperial virtue of *Clementia* [mercy]."⁶² Moreover, the details adapted from Sophocles concerning the welcome Oedipus receives in Athens position the whole city as an embodiment of this important Roman virtue. Statius takes full advantage of the opposition of Theseus and Creon that is developed in *Oedipus at Colonus*, but renders it more Roman by altering the disposition of

58 Heslin (2008) 121–2 observes that "Statius wants to shift [*Oedipus at Colonus*] not only in time, but also in space," as he places the death of Oedipus after the deaths of Eteocles and Polyneices (following Euripides' *Phoenician Women*) and moves the events of the tragedy from Colonus to the Athenian Agora. As Heslin remarks, Statius probably intends to identify the "altar of clemency" with the altar of the twelve gods in the Agora.

59 Heslin (2008) 127–8; cf. Dietrich 1999. Compare *Thebaid* 12. 588–610 with *Oedipus at Colonus* 636–7.

60 Heslin (2008) 126.

61 Heslin (2008) 126–7.

62 Heslin (2008) 128. Heslin and other scholars (e.g., Vessey (1973) 312–5, Lauriola (2015) 333) agree that Statius presents Theseus as an ideal ruler, but Coffee (2009) 228 argues that Statius uses the Athenian king "to express a deep suspicion of absolute power."

Creon. In Sophocles, Creon is an apologist and advocate for Eteocles and the Theban people.⁶³ In contrast, Statius' Creon is crippled by grief after the heroic self-sacrifice of his son Menoeceus (10. 589–780); he succumbs to the same savage passion that overtook Oedipus, bringing ruin on the family and the city (12. 70–104; cf. 1. 46–88), and his intransigent refusal to permit the burial of the dead Argives leads to a second disastrous war for Thebes.⁶⁴ Thus the opposition between Theseus and Creon in Statius, though originating in Sophocles, seems indebted to the antithesis of *pietas* (“duty”) and *furor* (“madness”) that had become firmly established as a central theme in Roman epic poetry by Virgil's *Aeneid* (31–19 BC).⁶⁵

Several parallels with *Oedipus at Colonus* have been adduced in *Samson Agonistes* (published in 1671) by the English poet and author John Milton (1608–1674).⁶⁶ Milton may have started *Samson Agonistes* in the 1640s, before he (like Oedipus and Samson) lost his sight.⁶⁷ Milton's preface identifies the work as “a dramatic poem” and acknowledges debts to Athenian tragedy for the retelling of the Biblical story of Samson, one of the judges of the Israelites, which is recounted in *Judges* 13:2–16:31. In particular Milton states, “The chorus is here introduced after the Greek manner”; other features of his plot are such that “they will best judge who are not unacquainted with Aeschulus [sic], Sophocles, and Euripides.” But he states that the work “never was intended” for production on the stage.⁶⁸

Samson Agonistes takes place on the final day of its blind and abject protagonist's life. Once a great warrior who successfully led the people of Israel against the Philistines (129–44, 1164–7; cf. *Judges* 15:9–20), Samson is now the captive of his enemies, thanks to the treachery of his second wife, the Philistine Dalila (Delilah), who cut his hair—the source of his strength—and thus betrayed him to her people (407–13, 1164–7; cf. *Judges* 16:18–20).⁶⁹ The Philistines captured, blinded, and enslaved Samson, who now labors as the prison mill (1–9,

63 *Oedipus at Colonus* 735–52.

64 Vessey (1973) 130–1.

65 For a different assessment, see Coffee (2009).

66 Parker (1937) 168–76; Mueller (1980) 197–209; Markantonatos (2007) 236–7; Chernaik (2012) 200.

67 Burberry (1997).

68 Milton (1999) 619–22.

69 Milton styles Dalila as Samson's wife, but, as Parker (1937) 7 observes, “The Biblical Samson was not, so far as we can tell, married to Dalila.” In Milton, Dalila cuts Samson's hair (766–818); in *Judges* 16:19, she calls in “a man” to shave him.

cf. *Judges* 16:21). In Milton's poem, he is first visited while he takes a rest from his toils by a chorus of men from the tribe of the Danites, who seek to commiserate with him (180–5), and then by his father Manoa, who has come in order to offer the Philistines ransom for his son's life (333–651). Samson, however, disconsolately argues that he does not deserve to be ransomed: "Let me here,/ As I deserve, pay on my punishment,/ and expiate, if possible my crime,/ Shameful garrulity" (488–91). Dalila herself subsequently arrives, intending to make amends with her former husband (733–9). Although Samson rejects her explanations of her conduct—whereby she affixes blame on Samson's "weakness" in confiding in her—and forbids her to approach him (766–953), his ultimate answer to her is, "At distance I forgive thee" (954). His next visitor is Harapha of Gath, a Philistine military commander who does not figure in the Biblical account. In a tense confrontation, Harapha claims that Samson's former successes in battle could have only been due to "spells/ And black enchantments, some magician's art (1132–3). When Samson avers that "no hidden spells," but rather "the living God who gave me/ At my nativity this strength" (1139–41), Harapha's aspersions concerning the failure of God ("what e'er He be," 1156) to protect Samson from his enemies provokes a challenge from the blind man that forces his opponent to retreat, although not without threats of retribution (1168–1244). An officer arrives to take Samson to the feast of the Philistine god Dagon, where he will serve as popular entertainment (1310–426). Samson at first refuses to go on the grounds that "Our Law forbids at their religious rites/ My presence," 1320–1); when the officer returns and reports the threats of the Philistine "lords," he acquiesces. Manoa returns with the good news that his offer of ransom has been accepted; his exchange with the chorus is interrupted by a noise that "[tears] the sky" (1470); another loud noise is a "universal groan,/ As if the whole inhabitation perished" (1511–2). A messenger who escaped from the collapse of Dagon's temple confirms that the upper echelon of Philistine society has indeed perished, along with Samson, who with divine assistance brought down the entire structure by shaking the pillars to which he had been chained (1629–59). Manoa urges the chorus not to grieve for Samson (1708–12):

"Come, come, no time for lamentation now,
Nor much more cause. Samson hath quit himself
Like Samson, and heroically hath finished
A life heroic, on his enemies/ Fully revenged."

Persuaded, the chorus conclude with an acknowledgement of the "highest wisdom" of God.

Like *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Samson Agonistes* focuses on the day on which its protagonist dies, and it begins with a tableau that exposes his abjection.⁷⁰ And, like Sophocles' Oedipus, Samson actively participates in most of the dialogue and is absent for only the final episode. The messenger's report of Samson's death and miraculous revenge on the Philistines (*Samson Agonistes* 1565–659) has affinities with the description of Oedipus' equally marvelous passing (*Oedipus at Colonus* 1579–669); in both cases, the death reported is a “blessing to one nation . . . but means destruction for the other.”⁷¹ Manoa's injunction against “lamentation” and his description of the posthumous honors that will be given Samson (*Samson Agonistes* 1708–44) match a similar appeal from Theseus (*Oedipus at Colonus* 1751). We might discover additional parallels in the role initially played by Manoa, who like Sophocles' Ismene arrives and then departs “in the service” of the protagonist, and in the parts of Dalila and Hapatha, who each may evoke different aspects of Sophocles' Creon.⁷²

But in several regards *Samson Agonistes* conforms imperfectly to *Oedipus at Colonus*. The transgressions that isolate Samson from his people and his God—i.e., his marriage to two Philistine women and his confidence in Dalila—differ from Oedipus' parricide and incest, and Samson's former prowess in battle, praised at length by the chorus (*Samson Agonistes* 123–85), has no counterpart in the achievements of Sophocles' Oedipus. Unlike Oedipus, Samson takes full responsibility for his downfall with no pleading about his ignorance (374–80);⁷³ although he has initially no confidence in his utility to others (565), he engages in a kind of “self-analysis” that eventually leads him “to suspect the splendour of his heroic life as a semblance that concealed a spiritual misery far deeper than his physical suffering” and prepares him for “his final act” against the Philistines.⁷⁴ Thus even critics who suggest that Sophocles' tragedy may have served as Milton's model acknowledge that *Samson Agonistes* likely owes debts to many different Athenian tragedies, including the *Prometheus Bound* attributed to Aeschylus (mid-5th century BC), Sophocles' *Ajax* (mid-440s BC) and *Philoctetes* (409 BC), as well as Euripidean tragedies such as *Bacchae* (ca. 406 BC), *Heracles* (ca. 420 BC), and *Trojan Women* (415 BC).⁷⁵

70 Parker (1937) 169–71; Mueller (1980) 197.

71 Parker (1937) 175.

72 Parker (1937) 172–4. But Mueller (1980) 197 adduces a more convincing parallel between Manoa and Io in the *Prometheus Bound* attributed to Aeschylus (mid-5th century BC).

73 Chernaik (2012) 201–2, 205.

74 Mueller (1980) 203–4.

75 E.g., Parker (1937) 75–109 and 177–85; Kessner (1974); Mueller (1980) 197–209; Shawcross (2001) 36–9; Hoxby (2015) 137–45. In my view, Manoa's efforts to combat Samson's despondency

Samson Agonistes has prompted a range of critical interpretations in modern times. Scholars disagree particularly about the significance of Samson's final moments: are we to accept Manoa's view that God was "favoring and assisting to the end" (*Samson Agonistes* 1720), or should we recoil from the violent way in which Samson avenges himself on his enemies and see that he "is a flawed warrior who meets his end in a misguided and self-directed act of vengeance (or even terrorism)"?⁷⁶ It may well be that "[a]cknowledging *Samson's* divided allegiances [i.e., to different tragic models] can . . . shed light on the divergent responses of modern readers, who cannot agree whether they are reading a story of isolation and suicide, or a fable of reintegration, healing, and glorification."⁷⁷ If it is possible to think that Milton's Samson is in part patterned on "heroes prominently associated with knowledge," such as Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus*,⁷⁸ then it also seems necessary to acknowledge that Milton's presentation of Samson's story is influenced by other models, and that his Samson is as much of a Heracles or an Ajax (or a Job) as an Oedipus.

Our final example of a non-dramatic literary work inspired by *Oedipus at Colonus* is "TV Men: Antigone (Scripts 1 and 2)" by the Canadian poet and classicist Anne Carson (1950–), one of the nine "TV Men" poems included in the collection *Men in the Off Hours*, published in 2000. The "TV Men" poems imagine interviews with famous historical figures such as Sappho, Thucydides, Leo Tolstoy, Antonin Artaud, Anna Akhmatova, and Virginia Woolf, as well as the Biblical Lazarus and Antigone.⁷⁹ At just two pages, "TV Men: Antigone (Scripts 1 and 2)" is one of the shortest. It falls into four sections: the first and third sections are narratives related from a third-person perspective that describe Antigone and Oedipus' wanderings; the second presents the brief reflections on her experiences as a wanderer that Antigone shares in her interview, speaking directly into the microphone after she has "motion[ed] the soundman out of the way," and the fourth is a drastically pared down and rearranged version of the "script" presented in the second section, in which an unidentified "we"

(*Samson Agonistes* 304–651) seem particularly reminiscent of Theseus' approach to Heracles in Euripides' *Heracles* 1163–418. Milton's debts to Biblical poetry of lament, particularly in the book of *Job*, should also not be overlooked; see Wall (1978).

76 Hoxby (2015) 139; cf. Chernaik (2012) 208.

77 The question is posed by Hoxby (2015) 140. For an autobiographical interpretation of Milton's representation of Samson's perseverance, see Markantonatos (2007) 236–7.

78 Mueller (1980) 198.

79 Carson (2000) 61–118.

have cut and edited the original “take” down to a seven-second clip “for sound-bite purposes.”⁸⁰

Carson’s poem makes no explicit reference to *Oedipus at Colonus*, and the scenario it imagines, of Antigone stopped for an interview during a lunch break on a day that might be like any other as she follows her wandering father, obviously lies outside the plot of Sophocles’ tragedy. Nonetheless, the overall portrait it paints of the diligent daughter following the old blind man is plainly indebted to the faithful and protective Antigone of *Oedipus at Colonus* and also Seneca’s *Phoenician Women*.

Much like *Oedipus at Colonus*, the poem is characterized by palpable tensions—between resignation and hopefulness, between the impression of severe austerity and the discovery of great beauty in the harsh landscape through which Antigone and Oedipus travel, between the hardships entailed in the life of tending to an elderly wanderer and the moments of great tenderness shared by father and daughter. Antigone’s guarded hopefulness sets the mood of the poem’s two initial sections. The first narrative section draws attention to the austere environment in which the pair find themselves, as they walk under a “March sky cold as a hare’s paw” amid tree trunks that have been “forced down by wind” and “crawl on the gravel.”⁸¹ At the same time, the opening verses capture their regular routine in terms that hint at, in a subtly reassuring way, a familiar parent-child dynamic: “Antigone likes walking behind Oedipus/ to brake the wind./ As he is blind, he often does not agree to this.”⁸² Our attention is immediately drawn to the time that even a legendary pair of wanderers must take for everyday necessities, as they stop and “eat lunch on the lip of a crater.”⁸³ During her interview in the second section, Antigone begins by conceding the difficulty of “the way we live,” but then notes a silver lining in her life of wandering: “Other things I like—a burnish/ along the butt end of days/ that people inside houses never see.”⁸⁴ This hint of optimism is anticipated in the first section by Antigone’s discovery of a small sign of new life, a “green centimeter of twig” to which she guides her father’s hand, in the otherwise barren landscape of the crater and the wind-driven tree trunks.⁸⁵

80 Carson (2000) 100–1.

81 Carson (2000) 100.

82 Carson (2000) 100. The clever pun in these verses on “breaking wind,” as the young woman follows her elderly father, merits notice.

83 Carson (2000) 100. The details concerning Antigone and Oedipus’ lunch perhaps reflect the interest of the collection as a whole in what people do in “the off hours.”

84 Carson (2000) 100.

85 Carson (2000) 100.

And it is echoed at the conclusion of the second section, when she ends her interview by asserting that it is possible to win “freedom” from the “big anarchy” that is “at our backs,” provided that one is strong enough to “twist off a bit and pound on it.”⁸⁶ Her partiality for the “burnish along the butt end of days” is echoed and valorized by the narrative in the third section, where we are told that the pair, on the move again after their brief stop, are “Both of them gold all along the sunset tide.”⁸⁷

Antigone’s modest optimism is tempered, however, by the fatalism evinced by her father in the narrative of the third section. Oedipus, described at the beginning of the first section as having “often . . . not agree[d]” to letting his daughter follow him, rises on his own at the beginning of the third section and begins “to move off, into the wind, immersed in precious memory.”⁸⁸ Antigone follows, silently critical of her father’s absorption in his memories, but seemingly unaware that in fact he has recognized his “last bell.”⁸⁹ The final verses of this section hint that Oedipus is aware of not merely his own imminent demise, but the general helplessness of humanity: “*Among all fleshbags you will not find/ one who if God/ baits/ does not bite.*”⁹⁰ This awareness contrasts with the confidence Antigone expresses in the possibility that “freedom” can be “pounded” out of “anarchy.” Antigone’s guarded confidence seems further undercut by the carelessness of her interviewers. Although the parenthetical note introducing the poem’s fourth and final section assures readers, “. . . we felt we got her ‘take’ right,” the ensuing jumble of words and phrases excerpted from the “script” of the second section’s original interview guts her intelligent, thoughtful reflections on personal sacrifice and its paradoxical rewards. For example, the joke she ventures to make in the second section, “I want to make a lot of money,” which she immediately qualifies with a “*Just kidding,*” gets cut and spliced with her other remarks, so as to create a vapid sentiment wholly alien to her way of thinking: “*Other things I like: a lot of money.*”⁹¹

Although the lip of the desolate crater on which Carson’s Oedipus and Antigone sit and eat lunch is a far cry from the lush grove of the Eumenides, the tableau of the pair of wanderers stopping for rest seems inspired by the opening scene of *Oedipus at Colonus*. It is possible to detect in the poem’s third section, in which Oedipus gets up of his own accord and “begins to move

86 Carson (2000) 101.

87 Carson (2000) 101.

88 Carson (2000) 101.

89 Carson (2000) 101.

90 Carson (2000) 101; the italics are Carson’s.

91 Carson (2000) 101.

off,” having heard “the last bell,” specific echoes of the final movements of the protagonist in Sophocles’ tragedy, who recognizes the portents that signal his pending death and exits toward his ultimate resting place, leading the way before Theseus, Antigone, and Ismene (*Oedipus at Colonus* 1457–555). What is more, Carson’s Antigone—whose eye is caught by the one sign of new green life in an otherwise barren landscape, and who makes sure that her father feels the green twig with his hand—appears to distill an important aspect of her Sophoclean namesake, who is more than once represented as envisioning possibilities for reconciliation, compromise, and new beginnings that her male relatives struggle to grasp.⁹² But, whereas Sophocles’ character is up against the deadly intransigence of her father and brothers, Carson’s Antigone encounters in her quest for “freedom” an obstacle far more obdurate than her father’s fatalism or the winds that force down whole trees—i.e., the “TV Men” who, in rewriting her “script,” transform her into their own insipid construct, as is evidenced in the poem’s nonsensical concluding verses: “*Here, twist a bit off./ Freedom is next.*”⁹³

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

In antiquity, *Oedipus at Colonus* does not appear to have inspired many works of visual art.⁹⁴ One notable exception is a vase-painting by the De Schulthess Painter or a member of his circle on a *calyx crater* (mixing bowl) dating to the mid-4th century BC, discovered in Taranto in southern Italy and now located in the Geddes Collection in Melbourne, Australia. The painting depicts a white-haired man sitting on an altar between two younger women. The woman on the left wears an elaborate garment and has ribbons in her hair; she gestures with her left hand toward the older man and the other woman, who wears a plainer garment and has her head partially veiled. A bearded male figure with a scepter stands to the left of the three central figures, and a younger, beardless man wearing a cloak stands to the right. Hovering above the young man on the right

92 In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Antigone convinces her father to yield to the chorus’s wishes and leave his seat in the Eumenides’ sanctuary (171–5) and later prevails on him to hear out Polyneices (1181–210). She then attempts to talk Polyneices out of attacking Thebes (1414–46) and, at the tragedy’s conclusion, determines to return to her native city with Ismene in the hopes of preventing her brothers’ deaths (1768–72).

93 Carson (2000) 101.

94 Shapiro (1994) 137; Taplin (2007) 88–107; Matheson (2014) 151; Finglass (2015) 219–20.

is a winged female figure. Although none of the six figures in the scene is explicitly identified, the painting is universally recognized as “show[ing] the Oedipus at Colonus story with details that cannot be interpreted without knowledge of Sophocles’ play.”⁹⁵ The central figure is clearly Oedipus seated between his daughters, and the young man to the right is indubitably Polyneices, with a Fury (Erinys) close to his head.⁹⁶ The exact identification of the female figures and the bearded man on the left is less certain. If we suppose that the painting represents the cursing of Polyneices in *Oedipus at Colonus* 1348–96, we might assume that Antigone, who is actively involved in this scene, is the animated female figure to the left.⁹⁷ It has also been suggested, however, that the well-dressed woman on the left is the recently arrived Ismene, who (as in *Oedipus at Colonus* 310–460) anxiously tells her father and sister about the coming war between the brothers.⁹⁸ On this interpretation, the inclusion of Polyneices in the tableau would simply allude to his role in Ismene’s narrative, since he is not present on stage in this early scene. The bearded male figure has also been variously identified as either Theseus or Creon, neither of whom is on stage during Ismene’s report or Oedipus’ later confrontation with Polyneices.⁹⁹ Thus, whether this figure is identified as Creon or Theseus, his inclusion gestures toward the role he plays in the tragedy as a whole and does not imply his presence on stage during the scene represented in the painting.

A much later wall painting on the upper floor of House-tomb 16 at Tuna el-Gebel, the necropolis of the city of Hermopolis Magna (known also by its Egyptian name, “Khmun”) in Middle Egypt, may be more indirectly indebted to *Oedipus at Colonus*. The painting, which dates to the Roman Imperial period (1st–4th centuries AD), is one of several depictions of episodes from Greek mythology in the necropolis.¹⁰⁰ On the left side, Oedipus confronts the Sphinx who has tormented the Thebans with her riddles, and on the right he deals fatal blow to Laius, who has fallen to his knees. Between these two scenes are three personified figures: *Zetema* (“Inquiry”), furthest to the left, gazes at Oedipus in the Sphinx scene, “Thebe,” the nymph who personifies the

95 Taplin (2007) 100; cf. e.g. Krauskopf (1990) 796–7; Nervegna (2014) 181; Matheson (2014) 151.

96 See e.g. Krauskopf (1990) 796 and Taplin (2007) 100 on these identifications.

97 Nervegna (2014) 181; cf. Krauskopf (1990) 796–7.

98 Matheson (2014) 151.

99 Taplin (2007) 101 identifies the bearded man as Creon, who is presented in the scene as Polyneices’ “rival”; cf. Matheson (2014) 151. In the eyes of Nervegna (2014) 181, the figure is “Theseus, in all likelihood.”

100 See Venit (2016) 87–108, esp. 102–7, for a detailed description and interpretation of the painting and its context. The painting is also discussed in the chapter on *Oedipus the King* in this volume (see above, 248).

Greek city of Thebes, sits in the middle in front of a representation of Mount Cithaeron, and “Agnoia” (“Ignorance”) on the right recoils in horror at the son’s murder of his father. From the perspective of the action of *Oedipus at Colonus*, the events depicted in this painting are in the distant past; nonetheless, it has been argued that the patron who commissioned the wall-painting for his tomb-house may have selected scenes from Oedipus’ life because of his transformation in Sophocles’ final tragedy “from an outcast to a hero” who becomes transcendent in death.¹⁰¹ The patron, perhaps an initiate in one of the mystery cults, such as that of Demeter and Persephone or of Dionysus, may have aspired to a similar transcendence.¹⁰²

Oedipus at Colonus also inspired several important works of art dating to the 18th and 19th centuries. Paintings by the Swiss artist Johann Heinrich Füssli (1741–1825, also known as Henry Fuseli) and the French artists Jean-Antoine-Theodore Giroust (1753–1817) and Marcel-André Baschet (1862–1941) depict the tense scene in which Oedipus curses Polyneices in the presence of Antigone and Ismene (*Oedipus at Colonus* 1348–96). The influence of Neoclassicism, and particularly of the famous painting by Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825), *The Oath of the Horatii* (1785), is evident in Giroust’s 1788 rendering of the scene, titled *Oedipus at Colonus*. Giroust’s Polyneices, standing on the left with a crested helmet and a red military cloak, falls back on his right foot with his torso crumpled forward, as if he felt in his entire body the impact of his father’s curse; blind Oedipus, seated on the right in front of a temple, with a red garment around his lower body, thrusts his right arm toward his son in a vigorous gesture of rejection; one daughter kneels at his left side and clings to him, whereas the other, standing behind her father, appears to be about to intervene between the two men. The paintings by Füssli (*Oedipus Cursing His Son*, 1786) and Baschet (*Oedipus Damning His Son*, 1883) represent Oedipus gesturing in a similar fashion as he orders his son to leave; in these depictions, however, Polyneices has already collapsed to the ground before his father, and he turns his head away from his family. Füssli also painted *The Death of Oedipus* (1784) in which the white-haired and -bearded Oedipus, a severe expression on his face, sits slightly hunched over, hands raised and fingers pointing upwards, while his daughters clasp his knees in sorrow and despair.¹⁰³ A similar tableau, clearly

101 Venit (2016) 106–7.

102 See Venit (2016) 106–8 for a discussion of the importance of mystery cults to the persons who had house-tombs constructed in this necropolis.

103 Ryan (2010) 206–54 analyses both paintings by Füssli (Fuseli) in detail, arguing that they “depict different moments in *Oedipus at Colonus* as sublime” (p. 210) and also “represent a “Christianising” of the Greek literary tradition.

inspired by the messenger's description of Antigone and Ismene's final grief-stricken embrace of their father in *Oedipus at Colonus* 1607–19, is captured in another painting dating to 1784 by the French artist Benigne Gagneraux, titled *The Blind Oedipus Commending His Children to the Gods*. Gagneraux, however, sets the scene inside a temple and incorporates ten additional figures, who take in the spectacle of the grieving family.

Many artists in this period also painted Antigone escorting Oedipus in the midst of their travels. Representatives of this type of composition are two paintings dating to the 1820s by the Polish painters Alexander Kokular and Antoni Brodowski, and similar works by the Spanish painter José Ribelles y Helip (1800), the Danish artist Christoffer Wilhelm Eckersberg (1812), and the Swedish Per Gabriel Wickenberg (1833). In *The Plague of Thebes* (possibly 1840s), the French artist Jean Francois Jalebert (1819–1901) captures the moment when Antigone leads Oedipus out of Thebes. In the painting *Oedipus at Colonus* (1798) by Fulcran-Jean Harriet, an exhausted Antigone sleeps with her head in the lap of her father, who is represented as a powerfully built, white-bearded man with downcast eyes, his left hand placed tenderly on his sleeping daughter's shoulder as he directly faces the viewer. With her blue Phrygian cap, Harriet's Antigone is perhaps intended to recall the figure of "Marianne" that was adopted in 1792 by the National Convention (the governing body of the First Republic) as a national symbol of liberty, reason, and the civic virtues championed by revolutionary France.¹⁰⁴ If so, this representation of Antigone and Oedipus taps into powerful political imagery that associates Antigone's loving care of her father with the defense of France by all of the values and principles that "Marianne" had come to represent. A marble sculpture by Jean-Baptiste Hugues, dating to 1885 and also titled *Oedipus at Colonus*, similarly captures the tender relationship of daughter and father, but without apparent political overtones. The sculpture represents the pair sitting side by side on a bench, with a bareheaded Antigone wearily resting her head on the right shoulder of Oedipus, who embraces and supports her back with his right arm. Begun in 1930, the surrealist painting *Oedipus and Antigone* (*Edipo e Antigone*) by the Italian modernist Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978) uses faceless manikins to represent father and daughter. The figure representing Oedipus sits on a straight-backed chair; his arms and legs are those of a human being, and his left hand holds up his head, but the elaborately wrought back of the chair takes the place of his torso. The elliptical spheroid that is his head appears dark and empty, and the index finger of his left hand presses "into an area where an eye

104 Agulhon (1981) 9–10, 88, 112–29.

might be found on the face.”¹⁰⁵ Antigone stands to his left, her right arm placed around his neck and shoulders in a gesture of comfort; a tiny door—too small for a human being to get through—is visible in the background.¹⁰⁶

Léon Bakst (1866–1924), the Russian painter and costume designer who had a long association with the Ballets Russes, produced elaborate watercolor paintings of costumes he designed for the actors playing Oedipus, Antigone, and Ismene in the 1904 Russian-language production of *Oedipus at Colonus* at the Alexandrinski Theater in Saint Petersburg.¹⁰⁷

Music

Music was an essential feature of *Oedipus at Colonus* in its original production at Athens’ Theater of Dionysus and in revival productions in Athens and elsewhere during the fourth century BCE and later.¹⁰⁸ The anecdotes concerning Sophocles’ recitation of one or more choral songs from *Oedipus at Colonus*¹⁰⁹ make it reasonable to speculate that in antiquity the songs achieved some kind of fame on their own, independently of re-stagings of the tragedy. But it is not at all certain that the music Sophocles composed was faithfully recreated in the decades and centuries after his tragedy’s original production.

In the modern era, music has featured prominently in important stage adaptations of *Oedipus at Colonus*, and the tragedy has also inspired several works that are, first and foremost, musical. Music was a key component of *Caractacus*, a play by the British poet and clergyman Reverend William Mason (1724–1797), which premiered at London’s Covent Garden in 1776.¹¹⁰ Mason’s play aroused considerable excitement at the time of its premiere because of its innovative use of choral song, which had not previously been featured in adaptations of Athenian tragedy in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.¹¹¹ Unfortunately, the score used for the performances at Covent Garden was subsequently lost; it is

105 Schumacher (2007) 19–20.

106 Schumacher (2007) 45.

107 My source for information about this production is the University of Oxford’s Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama: <http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/productions/production/305>.

108 See Finglass (2012) for a review of the evidence for revival performances of Sophocles’ tragedies, and Nooter (2012) 147–77 for a detailed analysis of the use of choral and solo singing in *Oedipus at Colonus*.

109 These anecdotes are discussed above, 336–9.

110 Details of the play are further discussed below, 363–7.

111 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 185–8, 192–204.

known, however, that Mason did not compose the score, and that he did not approve of it.¹¹²

The Italian composer Antonio Sacchini (1730–1786), who was active at the court of King Louis XVI of France (1754–1793), composed two operas indebted to Sophocles' tragedy.¹¹³ The first, *Oedipe à Colone* ("Oedipus at Colonus"), is derived directly from Sophocles; billed as an operatic *tragédie lyrique* ("lyric tragedy") and with a libretto by Nicolas-François Guillard, it was performed first for the king's court at Versailles in January 1786 and was mounted in 1787 (after the composer's death) by the Paris Opera at the Théâtre de le Port Saint-Martin.¹¹⁴ Guillard introduced significant alterations to the plot, most notably, the reconciliation of Oedipus and Polyneices in the third act and the overall diminution of the chorus's role.¹¹⁵ The second opera is indirectly related to *Oedipus at Colonus* because it is loosely based on William Mason's play *Caractacus*, discussed in the paragraph above. Titled *Arvire et Évéline* ("Arvire and Evelina") and also with a libretto by Guillard, it premiered in Paris in 1788. A generation or so later, another Italian composer, Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868) set to work in 1814 on composing an opera based on *Oedipus at Colonus* in collaboration with the Italian poet and translator Giambattista Giusti (1758–1829). Creative differences caused a falling out between the Rossini and Giusti before the opera, titled *Oedipus at Colonus*, was performed or published.¹¹⁶ After Rossini's death, the Parisian publishing house Troupenas, which had acquired rights to the work, published a single bass aria,¹¹⁷ but the full score was not recovered until 1952.¹¹⁸ A notable feature of the opera, which is "scored for a full orchestra, a bass solo, and a men's chorus," is the prominence it gives to the bass soloist, who "essentially assumes the role of the chorus leader," singing (for example) the opening stanza of the first stasimon that praises Colonus (*Oedipus at Colonus* 668–73).¹¹⁹

¹¹² Hall/Macintosh (2005) 195.

¹¹³ Ryan (2010) 255–314 provides a thorough analysis of Sacchini's *Oedipe à Colone*, concluding with observations about his *Arvire et Évéline*.

¹¹⁴ Napolitano (2010) 38.

¹¹⁵ Ryan (2010) 287. The libretto, with an English translation, is available on the website of Naxos Records: http://www.naxos.com/sungtext/PDF/660196-97oedipe_text.pdf.

¹¹⁶ Geary (2010) 52–3.

¹¹⁷ Geary (2010) 53.

¹¹⁸ The discovery of the full score is reported in an anonymously authored article, "Oedipus at Colonus, by Rossini: unpublished work found by Rome conductor N. Gallini," *The New York Times*, August 6, 1952, p. 17.

¹¹⁹ Geary (2010) 53.

Antigone und Oedip ("Antigone and Oedipus") is a short duet for a soprano and a baritone, accompanied by a piano, by the Austrian composer Franz Schubert (1797–1828). Its text is a two-part poem by the German poet Johann Baptist Mayrhofer (1787–1836); it was composed in 1817 and published in 1821. In the first part, while Oedipus sleeps, Antigone prays that the gods will kill her as a means of compensating for her father's crimes; upon waking, Oedipus in the second part recounts his nightmare and accepts the fact that death will soon come to him.¹²⁰

Having been commissioned by King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia (1795–1861) to write incidental music for four Greek tragedies, the German composer Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847) produced the score for *Ödipus in Kolonos* ("Oedipus in Colonus", Opus 93, 1845), consisting of nine songs written for multiple singers who take on the roles of Oedipus, Antigone, Ismene, Creon, Theseus, a leader of the chorus and two choral vocalists.¹²¹ It has been argued that the "fleeting yet unmistakable allusions to the Protestant chorale" in Mendelssohn's music appear "to reflect a larger effort aimed at lending the entire production . . . a certain Christian element."¹²²

In the next century, the Romanian composer and violinist George Enescu (1881–1955) wrote the music for an opera titled *Oedipe* ("Oedipus"), with a libretto in French by the Swiss playwright Edmond Fleg (1874–1953). The work was finished in 1931, but did not have its premier until March 1936, when it "played for only a modest eleven performances [at the Paris Grand Opera] before disappearing from the repertory of major international opera houses."¹²³ It recently enjoyed a revival production at La Monnaie in Brussels, which has subsequently toured to venues in other major cities, including London's Royal Opera House in the spring of 2016. The opera ambitiously covers Oedipus' entire life story, from birth to death, which means that the plot of only its fourth and final act is derived from *Oedipus at Colonus*. But it has been suggested that, in response to the pessimistic, determinist interpretations of the Oedipus myth popular in the 1930s, the opera as a whole "fully embraces the redemptive

120 The German text and an English translation are available at: http://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=11015.

121 Geary (2010) 60–1. Geary (54–8) discusses in detail the goals of Friedrich Wilhelm's program of cultural reform and his patronage of Mendelssohn. *Ödipus in Kolonos* premiered at the Prussian Court in Potsdam in 1845, but, as Geary notes (64–5), its success was only "modest" when it was restaged in Munich in 1854.

122 Geary (2010) 61.

123 O'Toole (2016). Enescu and Fleg's opera is also discussed in the chapter on *Oedipus the King* in this volume (see above, 261–3).

theme of *Oedipus at Colonus* and transforms the apparently bleak myth into a ritual in which the very scale of suffering Oedipus withstands turns him from social pariah to spiritual paragon.¹²⁴ “[P]laying up the redemptive possibilities of the story,” Fleg and Enescu eliminate Oedipus’ curse on Polyneices and Eteocles (*Oedipus at Colonus* 1383–96), while highlighting the loving relationship between Oedipus and Antigone.¹²⁵

The Gospel at Colonus also merits mention in this section because of its music.¹²⁶ The collaboration of the American playwright and director Lee Breuer (1937–) and composer Bob Telson (1949–), it premiered in November 1983 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York City, and its music, which the creators describe as “an oratorio set in a black Pentecostal service,” was composed, arranged, and directed in the original performances by Bob Telson.¹²⁷ As the setting of the action in a church indicates, the musical numbers are conceived of and performed as religious hymns that would be sung during a service of worship to the accompaniment of an organ. The play, it has been argued, capitalized on the popularity in the United States of Gospel musicals, which “began to develop in the mid-twentieth-century as a genre of theatre created by and for African Americans”; the trend generated several “crossover hits” that enjoyed runs on Broadway (as *The Gospel at Colonus* did in 1988).¹²⁸ True to the Gospel tradition, the score makes use not only of solo singers and a large choir, which serves as an on-stage congregation, but also three groups of singers (two quintets, both all male, and one quartet with two female and two male singers). The “Choragos Quintet” serves as the chorus; the “Oedipus Quintet” participates in portraying Oedipus, whereas the three back-up vocalists of the “Ismene Quartet” assist its soloist in representing Ismene.

The musical numbers in *The Gospel at Colonus* owe varying degrees of inspiration to Sophocles. The short song titled “Stop! Do Not Go On!,” sung by the Choragos Quintet as it confronts Oedipus and Antigone when they first enter, is close in spirit, if not in length, to the chorus’s parodos in *Oedipus at Colonus* 118–253. Sophocles’ first stasimon (668–719), celebrating the beauty of Colonus and the divine favor it enjoys, is transferred to the very beginning of

124 As O’Toole (2016) argues, “Enescu’s opera is at odds with the dominant twentieth-century take on Sophocles. The template was set, of course, by Sigmund Freud, whose Oedipus complex...shaped the Oedipus myth as the ultimate in cold determinism...In Paris in the 1930s, when Enescu’s opera appeared, the vastly more successful version of the Oedipus story was Jean Cocteau’s *The Infernal Machine*...”

125 O’Toole (2016).

126 Details of the play are further discussed below, 370–4.

127 Breuer/Telson (1989) xv–xvi.

128 Wetmore (2003) 104.

the play, where it is performed a cappella by a soloist who replaces the anonymous interlocutor in *Oedipus at Colonus* 36–80.¹²⁹ “Numberless,” sung by the Ismene Quartet at the end of the first act, is derived not from *Oedipus at Colonus*, but from the chorus’s first stasimon in Sophocles’ *Antigone*,¹³⁰ and the song performed by the Ismene Quartet upon their entrance, titled “How Shall I See You Through My Tears?,” is completely original.¹³¹

The most recent full-length musical work that incorporates material from *Oedipus at Colonus* is an opera titled *The Thebans*, with music by the British composer Julian Anderson (1967–) and libretto in English by the Irish writer Frank McGuinness (1953–), who currently teaches at the University of Dublin. *The Thebans* premiered at the Coliseum in London during the spring of 2014 and encompasses all three “Theban plays” by Sophocles, with a compressed version of *Oedipus at Colonus* as the final act.¹³²

Dance

Like music, dance was an integral feature of the original staging of *Oedipus at Colonus* and, we may assume, of revival performances in Athens and elsewhere in the ancient world. To my knowledge, there are no modern adaptations of the tragedy that are, first and foremost, works of dance comparable to Martha Graham’s 1947 adaptation of *Oedipus the King*, *Night Journey*.¹³³ Nonetheless, dance and choreographed movement have figured prominently in some musical and theatrical adaptations, such as William Mason’s 1776 drama *Caractacus*, Antonio Sacchini’s 1786 opera *Oedipe à Colone*¹³⁴ and Lee Breuer and Bob Telson’s 1983 musical play *The Gospel at Colonus*. Mason’s *Caractacus* served as the inspiration for a ballet staged in 1808 at London’s Drury Lane Theatre.¹³⁵

129 Breuer/Telson (1989) 11. Telson’s use of a soloist to sing what was originally a choral ode might be compared to Rossini’s rendering of the same choral song; see above, 356

130 Breuer/Telson (1989) 30–1; cf. *Antigone* 332–83. The short poem “Love Unconquerable” recited by the Evangelist Antigone after Oedipus curses Polyneices (Breuer/Telson (1989) 42) is derived from *Antigone* 781–90.

131 Breuer/Telson (1989) 14–16. In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Ismene does not have a singing role; as Nooter (2012) 162 points out about Sophocles’ distribution of singing parts, “Antigone seems to be the rightful heir of Oedipus’s abilities” as a singer.

132 McGuinness (2014).

133 *Night Journey* is discussed in the chapter on *Oedipus the King* in this volume (see above, 270–1, 278–9).

134 As Ryan (2010) 281–2 notes, “French opera traditionally included a range of dance movements,” and there are three “ballet suites” in the first act of Sacchini’s *Oedipe à Colone* and another dance piece at the end of Act 3. Sacchini’s operas, then, should also be considered as dance as well as musical adaptations of Sophocles’ tragedy.

135 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 213–4.

On Stage and Screen

Stage

Comedies performed in the Athenian Theater of Dionysus in the early 4th century BC were probably the first works on stage inspired by Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*.¹³⁶ As noted above, it has been suggested that a now lost comedy, which playfully assimilated Sophocles to Oedipus and his son Iophon to the wayward Polyneices, may have been the source of the biographical tradition concerning Sophocles' legal troubles with his son(s) and his recitation in court of *Oedipus at Colonus* to demonstrate his competency.¹³⁷ Whereas the existence of such a comic drama is a matter of speculation, the last extant comedy by Aristophanes, titled *Wealth*, which was first staged in 388 BC, appears to have concrete connections to Sophocles' tragedy.¹³⁸

Wealth opens with an old, blind man, dressed in tattered clothing, wandering in Athens. He is followed closely by two individuals, an Athenian citizen named Chremylus and his slave Cario. Chremylus, spectators learn, has just returned from Apollo's shrine at Delphi, where he sought the god's guidance about whether he should encourage his son to turn to a life of crime, given that, in his experience, piety and justice do not lead to prosperity. Apollo did not directly answer Chremylus' question, but instructed him to follow the first person he encountered and to persuade that person to come home with him. Hence Chremylus has followed the blind man, the first person he encountered upon leaving the shrine, without knowing his identity or where he intends to go. Pressed by Cario and Chremylus to reveal his name, the blind man resists and demands to be left alone, but when Cario threatens (with Chremylus' permission) to strike him, he discloses that he is the god Wealth—perhaps a surprising revelation, given that Wealth was typically represented as a young child holding a cornucopia, the son of the goddess Demeter and her mortal lover Iasion.¹³⁹ He also explains that he has been blinded by Zeus, who deprived him of his sight so that he is now unable to discriminate between just and good people, on whom he would like to bestow the blessings of prosperity, and the wicked, whom he would prefer to shun. Despite Chremylus'

136 Markantonatos (2007) 234 discusses the possibility that the *Oedipus* tragedies attributed by later sources to tragedians active in the 4th century BC may have had some debt to *Oedipus at Colonus*, even if *Oedipus the King* was their primary source of inspiration.

137 See above, 338–9, with the bibliography in n. 36.

138 Compton-Engle (2013).

139 Sommerstein (2001) 5–6; Compton Engle (2013) 157. But Sommerstein notes that, “in poetic and popular imagination,” Wealth was also conceived of as blind and incapable of distributing wealth to those who deserve it.

protestations concerning his own moral uprightness, Wealth tries to get away from him on the grounds that, like everyone else, he will become wicked and corrupt once he becomes rich. Only when Chremylus promises to help restore his sight, so that he can resume conferring benefits on good people and avoiding the bad, does the god agree to go home with him. Chremylus' plan is to take Wealth to the temple of Asclepius so that his blindness can be cured. Before doing so, he enlists the cooperation of the chorus, composed of hardworking but poor men like himself, and he surmounts a challenge to his plan by Poverty personified, who argues that restoring Wealth's eyesight will do far more harm than good to humankind because human beings are industrious only when motivated by need. After one night in Asclepius' temple, Wealth is once again able to see, and life is transformed for the residents of Athens. Some benefit from Wealth's redistribution of resources, while others do not.¹⁴⁰ The messenger god Hermes arrives with news of Zeus' intention to destroy humankind, now that the Olympian gods are no longer receiving sacrifices, but Cario persuades Hermes to ally himself instead with human beings. At the comedy's conclusion, Wealth is escorted from Chremylus' house to his new residence on the Acropolis, where he will serve as guardian of the goddess Athena's treasure house.

Although *Wealth* makes no explicit reference to *Oedipus at Colonus*, several features of the comedy, especially in its prologue, seem designed to evoke in a compressed fashion Oedipus' transformation from a blind, abject wanderer into a powerful benefactor of Athens.¹⁴¹ Aristophanes' unorthodox conception of the god as aged, sightless, and destitute mirrors Sophocles' representation of Oedipus, which many of *Wealth*'s original spectators would have witnessed in the same venue only a dozen or so years earlier, and it is possible that the comedy's prologue deliberately "misdirects" spectators, leading them to assume that the blind man whom Chremylus and Cario pursue at the behest of Apollo—who figures prominently in the Theban legend—is in fact Oedipus.¹⁴² Additional details facilitate the association of the action on

140 E.g., an anonymous man identified as "one of the good people" (τῶν χρηστῶν τις, 826) has acquired an inheritance from his father, which he has used to help his friends in need, whereas another, whom Cario calls an informer (συκοφάντης, 873) complains about the hard times into which he has fallen. Immediately after Cario and the good man enter Chremylus' house, an older woman arrives, complaining that she has been abandoned by her young boyfriend, who is no longer financially dependent on her (959–1096). See Olson (1990), Sommerstein (2001) 15–6, and Ruffell (2006) esp. 98–101 for more detailed discussions of these scenes.

141 Compton-Engle (2013) 169.

142 Compton-Engle (2013) 157–60, 167.

stage with Sophocles' tragedy: Chremylus and Cario paradoxically follow the lead of a blind man, just as Oedipus becomes a guide for Theseus, Antigone, and Ismene in *Oedipus at Colonus* 1539–55; Chremylus and Cario' threats of violence (*Wealth* 56–75) recall Creon's attempt at strong-arming Oedipus (*Oedipus at Colonus* 813–86).¹⁴³ Even after his true identity is revealed, *Wealth* evokes Sophocles' Oedipus. Just like Oedipus, he insists that his mistakes (i.e., in rewarding the wicked and depriving the innocent of his benefits) were unwitting and unwilling.¹⁴⁴ The restoration of *Wealth*'s sight has no parallel in the Sophoclean tragedy, and, as a god, he cannot die.¹⁴⁵ Yet the power *Wealth* gains to confer benefits and bring distress, and also the prospect of Athenian ascendance and prosperity intimated in the comedy's conclusion,¹⁴⁶ recall the promises that Oedipus makes to Theseus and also, perhaps, his threats and curses against his sons, Creon, and the rest of the Thebans.

The convincing case that *Wealth* is indebted to *Oedipus at Colonus* suggests that Sophocles' dramatization made a great impression on the imaginations of Aristophanes and his fellow Athenians. Aristophanes, it has been suggested, may have appropriated material from Sophocles' final tragedy for his comedy (his last, as it turned out) as “a kind of emulative acknowledgement” of the tragedian's greatness—a move that arguably permitted him to associate himself with Sophocles (and also Oedipus and *Wealth*) as an “aged yet ultimately vital” figure with “something of benefit yet to offer Athens.”¹⁴⁷ I propose as well that the echoes of *Oedipus at Colonus* underscore the complexity of the “new

143 Compton-Engle (2013) 160–1, who notes as well that *Wealth*'s reluctance to reveal his identity in this exchange has a parallel in Oedipus' unwillingness to tell the chorus his name (*Oedipus at Colonus* 204–23).

144 Compton Engle (2013) 161–7. The likening of Poverty to “a Fury straight out of tragedy” (Ἐρινύς . . . ἐκ τρυγφιδίας, *Wealth* 423) might constitute another link to *Oedipus at Colonus*, in which the power of the “dread goddesses” (84) to help and harm is frequently emphasized, most strikingly in Oedipus' curse on his sons (1390). Sophocles' connection to the cult of Asclepius in Athens (discussed by Edmunds [1996] 164–6 and Markantonatos [2007] 15–20) may have further facilitated the association of *Wealth*, who is healed in Asclepius' sanctuary, with the Sophoclean Oedipus.

145 As Compton-Engle (2013) 161 observes, the identification of the Aristophanic *Wealth* with the Sophoclean Oedipus is not “a straightforward one.”

146 I.e., by the permanent residence that *Wealth* will take up on the Athenian Acropolis (*Wealth* 1191–4).

147 Compton-Engle (2013) 169–70. Compton-Engle observes (165–6) that the plot of *Wealth* conforms to the late Sophoclean treatment of the theme of disease and health in tragedies such as *Philoctetes*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and the lost *Phineus*, which “focuses on the restoration and reincorporation of the diseased figure.” On the possible significance of Sophocles' *Phineus* to *Wealth*, see Compton-Engle (2013) 163–5.

world order" ushered in by the rehabilitation of Wealth.¹⁴⁸ Wealth's goal, upon regaining his sight, is to help the good and harm the bad, but the redistribution of resources he brings about does not appear completely wrinkle-free.¹⁴⁹ The presentation of Wealth's beneficence as something that is generally advantageous, but not without drawbacks, becomes all the more pointed if it is interpreted against the backdrop of Sophocles' Oedipus, whose curses not only affect those whom he wishes to harm, but also have extremely adverse consequences for his beloved daughters.

Of all the stage works inspired by *Oedipus at Colonus*, few have garnered better reception from contemporary audiences than *Caractacus*, by the British poet and clergyman Reverend William Mason (1724–1797).¹⁵⁰ *Caractacus* was initially published as a "dramatic poem" in 1759; Mason subsequently revised it for performance at London's Covent Garden in 1776. The primary sources for the story it dramatizes are ancient historical accounts of the Roman incursions into Britain during the reign of the emperor Claudius (37–54 AD).¹⁵¹ Although there is no explicit reference to *Oedipus at Colonus* in the text, the title page of the published version of the stage adaptation advertises that the play is "written on the model of the Ancient Greek Tragedy",¹⁵² and it is widely recognized that *Oedipus at Colonus* in particular was an important source of inspiration.¹⁵³

The play dramatizes the final effort of Caractacus, the aged king of the Catevellauni tribe, to repel a Roman force led by the general Aulus Didius. Caractacus has just lost a decisive battle in his ten-year war against the Romans; his wife Guideria has been captured, and he erroneously believes that his son Arviragus has fled. Caractacus has accordingly retreated on foot, accompanied only by his daughter Evelina, to the sacred oak grove on Mona (modern Anglesey), an island off the northwestern coast of Wales, where he encounters Modred, the chief Druid, and the chorus of bards led by their chief

148 The phrase "new world order" is from Ruffell (2006) 102.

149 The question of whether the discomfiting of the sycophant and the old woman in *Wealth* 850–1094 is meant to seem satisfying and unproblematic is a matter of critical controversy that is bound up with more general interpretational questions concerning *Wealth*, which are well discussed by Ruffell (2006). While it might seem self-evident that the sycophant is a bad actor (862), it is not clear that the old woman is one of the "wicked."

150 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 209–14.

151 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 184: "[*Caractacus*] stages a conflation of Tacitus' description of Caractacus (or rather Caratacus), the indomitable Briton captured during the reign of Claudius (*Annals* 12. 33–7) . . . with the same historian's account of the Druids' last stand at Mona (Anglesey) against Suetonius Paulinus (*Annals* 14. 29–30)."

152 Mason (1796) ii.

153 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 184–9; Markantonatos (2007) 237–8.

Mador. Simultaneously arriving at the grove are Aulus Didius and the sons of Cartismandua, the queen of the Brigantes, who has become the Romans' ally and handed over her children as pledges of her loyalty. The general promises Cartismandua's sons, Vellinus and Elidurus, that he will free them and refrain from destroying the grove, if they find a way to let him take Caractacus captive. Although the younger Elidurus is reluctant to engage in such treachery, Vellinus prevails on him, and the pair permit themselves to be captured by the Druids as a means of finding Caractacus and gaining his trust. The young men deceive Caractacus, telling him that Guideria is with Cartismandua. Their story, however, arouses grave suspicions in Modred, who commands all except the chorus to depart. Modred goes into a dream-like trance as the bards sing a hymn invoking "Inspiration"; on waking, he reveals to the bards that he has had a terrifying vision of an axe hanging over the grove, which he subsequently reveals to Caractacus. Convinced by his vision that Vellinus and Elidurus have betrayed Mona to the Romans, Modred readies ritual trials that will either exonerate or kill Elidurus, but the tender-hearted Evelina's intervention saves Elidurus from certain death. Arviragus arrives and explains that he did not flee the battle as Caractacus assumed, but rather withdrew in order to rally his troops—in vain, as it turns out, because Mona has indeed been betrayed to the Romans, whose ships are moored on the beach. Modred threatens to torture Elidurus for information about the Romans' plans; Elidurus once again refuses to betray his brother's complicity with the enemy, but demonstrates his own loyalty by offering to fight alongside of Arviragus and the Britons whom Modred summons for battle, while Vellinus remains with the Druids as a hostage. The arrangement is almost invalidated when Caractacus returns with news that Vellinus has escaped. Once again, Evelina's intervention spares Elidurus' life; the younger men head off to battle, while Modred charges Caractacus with guarding the central oak in the grove. At first the battle seems to go well for the Britons, who capture six Roman soldiers and prepare to offer them as human sacrifices to the gods, but the situation quickly deteriorates: Vellinus, who is later killed by Caractacus, leads the Romans into the grove, which they set on fire; Arviragus is mortally wounded and dies in his sister's arms, and Caractacus and Evelina, along with Elidurus, are taken captive. Aulus Didius, however, respects both the sanctity of the grove, which he promises not to destroy, and Evelina's grief for Arviragus. Evelina, Elidurus, and Caractacus are to join Guideria as captives in Rome, but the general assures Caractacus that the emperor will spare his life.

Caractacus was groundbreaking because of the integral role played by its chorus of Druidic bards, who sing and dance in several scenes—clearly intended to correspond to the choral odes of ancient Athenian tragedies—and

are intimately involved in its action from beginning to end.¹⁵⁴ In addition to this generic relationship to all tragic choruses, Mason's chorus arguably have a particular kinship with the chorus of *Oedipus at Colonus*. Although they have a priestly function and are not mere local inhabitants, the bards of *Caractacus*, like the old men from Colonus, have a special connection to the sacred grove they seek to protect, and a recurrent theme in their songs is their reverence for the gods who oversee the sanctuary. The sacred setting of *Caractacus*, with oaks replacing the olive trees of the Eumenides' sanctuary in Colonus, is a feature obviously borrowed from *Oedipus at Colonus*, as are Evelina's Antigone-like relationships with her aged father, whom she lovingly tends, and her brother, whom she defends in life and death.¹⁵⁵ *Caractacus*' estrangement from Arviragus is reminiscent of Oedipus' alienation from Polyneices, and the attempts to capture *Caractacus* by trick or by force, which form the core of the plot, are plainly modeled on the efforts of Sophocles' Creon and Polyneices to gain control over Oedipus.

The historical subject matter of *Caractacus* placed limits on Mason's borrowings from Sophocles. Most notably, the unalterable facts of the Romans' victory over the Britons and their capture of the *Caractacus* necessitated an ending for his play that differed from *Oedipus at Colonus*: Oedipus is released from suffering by death, but *Caractacus* departs for Rome bound in chains. This necessity perhaps inspired Mason to transform the claps of thunder that resound as the action reaches its climax, which are in *Oedipus at Colonus* welcome signals of Oedipus' deliverance, into the harbingers of death that spur *Caractacus* to rush bravely but unwisely into the fray, leading to his capture.¹⁵⁶ But this necessity may have also motivated an important shift of focus in Mason's play, in which preserving the sacred grove, as well as the ancient British heritage it represents, emerges as an object of higher priority than the freedom of the titular character. Thus the blow of *Caractacus*' capture is softened by Aulus Didius' (conditional) promise to keep the grove safe.¹⁵⁷ In a different vein, it should be

154 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 185–8, 192–204; cf. Mason (1796) iv–v. Hall/Macintosh discuss in detail how *Caractacus* capitalizes on “the mid-eighteenth-century craze for druids” that was “complemented by an interest in musical traditions believed to be inherited from the ancient Celtic bards” (192), and how “the play’s rituals blatantly conflate the British druids with ancient Greek choruses” (188).

155 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 187–8.

156 Mason (1796) 70, 72. Hall/Macintosh (2005) 188 argue that the prowess *Caractacus* demonstrates in battle, especially in killing the treacherous Vellinus, is modeled on the battlefield achievements of Heracles' aged companion Iolaus in Euripides' *Children of Heracles*.

157 Aulus Didius warns Modred (Mason [1796] 84):

This once our clemency shall spare your groves,

acknowledged that no “Oedipal” stories of incest, parricide, and familial dysfunction are attached to Caractacus, and Mason was thus at liberty to craft different kinds of relationships for his titular character with Modred and the chorus, who welcome the king without hesitation into the sacred grove, and with Arviragus, who achieves with his father the reconciliation that eludes Sophocles’ Polyneices.¹⁵⁸

Mason’s reshaping of material from *Oedipus at Colonus* also appears to reflect the complex perspectives on the Roman conquest of Britain that developed during the 18th century, which were influenced by contemporary political developments and military ventures. On the one hand, the early Britons were envisioned as noble resisters against the foreign rule violently imposed by Romans; on the other, the expanding British Empire invited comparison with that of the Romans, and the Romans of yesteryear were thus assimilated to the British of the present day.¹⁵⁹ In Mason’s *Caractacus*, the Romans are at once enemy invaders, threatening the grove of the Druids with fire and axes, and enlightened bearers of civilization, who put an end to barbaric practices of human sacrifice.¹⁶⁰ This ambivalent perspective on the Romans is encapsulated by Aulus Didius’ very imperfect correspondence with Creon in *Oedipus at Colonus*. Though reminiscent of Sophocles’ Creon in his desire to capture Caractacus, Aulus Didius is magnanimous in ways that Creon in both *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone* is not. He permits Evelina to grieve over her brother’s body and offers assurances that Arviragus will be properly buried; more generally, he guarantees that the Britons will not become “slaves.”¹⁶¹ Potential destroyers of the sacred grove on Mona and the great cultural heritage it

If at our call ye yield the British king:
 Yet learn, when next ye aid the foes of Caesar,
 That each old oak, whose solemn gloom ye boast,
 Shall bow beneath our axes.

158 As Markantonatos (2007) 238 puts it, “Arviragus is a felicitous combination of the personalities of Polyneices and Theseus”; cf. Hall/Macintosh (2005) 188.

159 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 183–4, 190, 214. Markantonatos (2007) 238 argues that Mason’s play presents “a strong anti-colonial message.” But, as Hall and Macintosh note (190), “[a]lthough by the mid-1770s Mason supported the cause of the American rebels, and had become extremely critical of British conduct abroad, he had originally intended *Caractacus* to ‘fight the cause of liberty and Britain’, by encouraging popular patriotic identification of ancient and contemporary Britons.”

160 Mason (1796) 82–3; cf. Hall/Macintosh (2005) 189.

161 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 189–90. Vellinus, who eventually pays for his treachery against his fellow Britons with his life, perhaps corresponds more closely to Sophocles’ Creon.

embodies, Aulus Didius and his Roman soldiers are paradoxically best able to guarantee its safety.

The Elder Statesman by the expatriate American poet and essayist Thomas Stearns (T. S.) Eliot (1888–1965) premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August 1958 and opened that autumn in London at the Cambridge Theatre. As in Eliot's three earlier verse plays with contemporary settings, the plot is loosely modeled on an ancient tragedy.¹⁶² Its protagonist and titular character, the sixty-year-old Lord Richard Claverton, was once an esteemed member of the British Parliament and has more recently led an important public corporation; a recent stroke, however, has forced him to retire.¹⁶³ As is revealed in the first act, which takes place in the parlor of Claverton's house, his devoted daughter Monica has arranged to escort him to a convalescent home, Badgley Court, in the hopes that he will recuperate there,¹⁶⁴ and the second and third acts are set on the grounds of Badgley Court.

But the peace and quiet Monica seeks to create for her father are disrupted in the first act by the appearance of Claverton's old acquaintance from Oxford, Frederick Culverwell, who served a prison sentence for forgery thirty-five years ago and then moved to the fictional Central American country of San Marco, where he changed his name to Federico Gomez.¹⁶⁵ In the second act, the appearance at Badgley Court of another figure from Claverton's past, the music hall singer Maisie Montjoy (née Batterson, now referred to by her married name, Mrs. John Carghill), mirrors Gomez's unwelcome visit in the first.¹⁶⁶ The unexpected arrival of Claverton's estranged and profligate son Michael, seeking financial assistance from his father, further complicates matters, especially when Mrs. Carghill and Gomez reappear and befriend Michael.¹⁶⁷ By stages Gomez and Mrs. Carghill disclose what Culverton has kept secret from his children: during and following his time at Oxford, he also lived profligately, as his son does now, protected by his father's money and influence.¹⁶⁸ Whereas

162 M. Simpson (2010–2011) 511. *The Family Reunion* (1939) is modeled on Aeschylus' *Eumenides* (458 BCE), *The Cocktail Party* (1949) on Euripides' *Alcestis* (438 BCE), and *The Confidential Clerk* (1953) on Euripides' *Ion* (ca. 414 BCE).

163 Eliot (1959) 25–6; cf. 40.

164 Eliot (1959) 18–19, 21. But Monica concedes to her fiancé Charles Hemington that her father “is much iller than he is aware of: / It may be, he will never return from Badgley Court” (21).

165 Eliot (1959) 29–33, 35, 39.

166 Eliot (1959) 60–74.

167 Eliot (1959) 76–89. When conversing with Charles at the beginning of Act 1 (19), Monica introduces the fact that Michael is estranged from his father.

168 Eliot (1959) 39–40, 67.

Gomez never proves that Claverton is responsible for “fostering” the “expensive tastes” that led him to become a forger, Mrs. Carghill and her lawyer still possess the love letters Claverton wrote her before breaking off their relationship, which he deemed inconvenient to his political aspirations.¹⁶⁹ Most damning, however, is Gomez’s revelation that he was a passenger in Claverton’s car on the night when the latter “ran over an old man in the road” and failed to stop.¹⁷⁰ Although it had been determined afterwards that the man had died of “natural causes” before he was struck, Claverton confesses in Act 3 to Monica and her fiancé Charles that awareness of his irresponsibility has “haunted” him for years.¹⁷¹

Eliot himself acknowledged his debts to *Oedipus at Colonus*.¹⁷² Claverton’s retirement to Badgley Court is modeled on Oedipus’ retreat to the sanctuary of the Eumenides in Colonus, and his relationships with his children—his dependence on the ever-attentive Monica and estrangement from the undisciplined Michael—recall the dynamic of Oedipus’ family.¹⁷³ Like Oedipus at the conclusion of Sophocles’ tragedy, Claverton departs at the end of *The Elder Statesman*, never to return. Having confessed to Monica and Charles the truth about the hit-and-run accident and his relationships with Gomez and Mrs. Carghill, he tells the young lovers that he is simply going for a stroll, but he knows that death is imminent, and in the play’s final moments Monica sees from a distance that her father, now “under the beech tree” where it is “quiet and cold,” “has gone too far to return to us.”¹⁷⁴ At the same time, Claverton also evokes the protagonist of Sophocles’ earlier Oedipus tragedy. The accident with the old man is a pale but disturbing replication of Oedipus’ killing of Laius, described in *Oedipus the King* 798–812, and Gomez and Mrs. Carghill, as sinister, Pinter-esque versions of the Corinthian messenger and Theban herdsman in *Oedipus the King* 924–1185, compel Claverton to own up to his reckless past and the slippages in his self-presentation.¹⁷⁵ Claverton does not suffer from ignorance of his identity *per se*, but, from the beginning of the play, when he stares at the blank pages of his engagement book, he struggles, Oedipus-like,

169 Eliot (1959) 39 and 70–2; cf. 107, 109.

170 Eliot (1959) 44.

171 Eliot (1959) 107–8.

172 Brown (2013) 168.

173 M. Simpson (2010–2011) 511–5.

174 Eliot (1959) 131.

175 On the debts to *Oedipus the King*, see M. Simpson (2010–2011) 514; on the possible debts to the British playwright Harold Pinter (1930–2008) for the characterizations of Gomez and Mrs. Carghill, see Mondello (2013).

to come to terms with who he really is.¹⁷⁶ He gains “freedom” only by making a full “confession” as a “sinner” to his daughter about his past, with the acknowledgement, “I’ve spent my life trying to forget myself,/ In trying to identify myself with the part/ I had chosen to play.”¹⁷⁷

The chief point on which *The Elder Statesman* differs from *Oedipus at Colonus* is the contentment and closure, if not outright happiness, it ultimately affords to all of its characters. For all of the turmoil caused by the confrontation with his past that has exposed him, in his own words, as “a broken-down actor,” Claverton takes leave of his daughter “brushed by the wing of happiness,” as he realizes that Monica has found in Charles someone she can love “for the man he really is.”¹⁷⁸ Indeed, Charles’ impassioned confession of love to Monica is the first thing spectators witness in Act 1, before Lord Claverton is introduced, and the play ends with Monica’s affirmation of her own happiness, despite her father’s death, because she feels “utterly secure” in Charles’ love.¹⁷⁹ Michael’s decision to accept Gomez’s offer of an unspecified job in San Marco “with jolly good pay” initially consternates his family and arouses suspicions in Charles, but he departs on cordial terms with all, assuring his sister of his fondness for her and telling her, “You’ll be seeing me again.”¹⁸⁰

Love, conquering all, plainly saves the Clavertons from the untimely deaths and misfortunes that trouble Oedipus’ family. The love manifested in the play is not just the all-absorbing romantic love of Monica and Charles, which frames the action, and Monica’s unshakable adoration of her father, but also Claverton’s great affection for his children, which permits him to acknowledge his shortcomings as their parent and, at last, to let them go.¹⁸¹ This emphasis on love’s power possibly reflects Eliot’s contentment in his recent marriage to Valerie Fletcher (1926–2012).¹⁸² It doubtless speaks as well to the important Christian themes of love, sacrifice, redemption, and salvation that inform many of Eliot’s works,¹⁸³ as is affirmed by the language with which Claverton

176 Eliot (1959) 23–4. Like Gomez and Mrs. Carghill, Claverton transformed himself by changing his name. According to Gomez (29–30; cf. 107), he was originally “plain Dick Ferry”; he took the surname “Claverton-Ferry” when he married and then became “Lord Claverton.”

177 Eliot (1959) 110; cf. 102–3, 105, 121, 127–8.

178 Eliot (1959) 103, 128.

179 Eliot (1959) 131–2.

180 Eliot (1959) 121–2.

181 Cf. Hashiuchi (1989), esp. 149–52.

182 Hashiuchi (1989) 149 observes that Eliot’s dedicatory preface to Valerie (Eliot (1959) 5) anticipates “the secret and silent mutual understanding . . . between Monica and Charles.”

183 Maurer (2013); Mondello (2013); cf. Hashiuchi (1989) 153. But Brown (2013) 172–3 expresses skepticism concerning this reading of the play.

makes his “confession” as a “sinner” to Monica and Charles, and by the terms with which he later expresses his love for Michael:

And Michael—
 I love him, even for rejecting me,
 For the *me* he rejected, I reject also.
 I've been freed from the self that pretends to be someone;
 And, in becoming no one, I begin to live.”¹⁸⁴

Recent interpretations have struck out in promising new directions, arguing that Eliot's drama displays great self-consciousness concerning its own status as a British theatrical work in the late 1950s. According to one analysis, *The Elder Statesman* reflects on both the craft of the actor and the limitations of theatrical realism.¹⁸⁵ Another analysis posits the play as a response not only to recent upheavals in the British theatrical scene, generated by the London premieres of iconoclastic dramas by John Osborne (1929–1994) and Harold Pinter (1930–2008), but also to the international military crises, namely the 1956 invasions of Egypt (by Israel, followed by France and the United Kingdom) and Hungary (by the Soviet Union).¹⁸⁶ On the latter interpretation, *The Elder Statesman* ambitiously grafts to the framework supplied by Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* a range of material culled from the western canon to create “an allegory of how European, and more widely ‘Western’ culture retains its historical and transatlantic integrity, specifically after the Suez Crisis and the Soviet invasion of Hungary.”¹⁸⁷

For today's American audiences, *The Gospel at Colonus* is probably the most familiar theatrical work inspired by *Oedipus at Colonus*. The musical play is the collaboration of the American playwright and director Lee Breuer (1937–) and composer Bob Telson (1949–); it is based on the translation of *Oedipus at Colonus* by the American poet and translator Robert Fitzgerald (1910–1985) and also incorporates passages from the translations of *Oedipus the King* and *Antigone* by Fitzgerald and Dudley Fitts (1903–1968).¹⁸⁸ After its premiere at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in November 1983, the play received productions in several American cities and European countries, and it had a two-month

184 Eliot (1959) 129.

185 Brown (2013).

186 M. Simpson (2010–2011).

187 M. Simpson (2010–2011) 510.

188 Breuer/Telson (1989) vii; Fitts/Fitzgerald (2002).

run on Broadway in 1988.¹⁸⁹ Cast recordings were released in 1985 and 1988; a performance of the play taped in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania was televised in the United States in 1985 as part of the *Great Performances* series on the Public Broadcasting Service network (PBS), and a DVD of this performance was issued in 2008. Recent revivals include productions at New York City's Apollo Theater (2004) and Los Angeles' Holden Performing Arts Center (2015).

The play is conceived of as a service in an African-American Pentecostal church, for which a "lesson" from the "Book of Oedipus" is the chosen text.¹⁹⁰ A large choir, seated in stalls behind the stage in the original performances, "serves as an onstage congregation."¹⁹¹ Individual members of the congregation can regularly be heard calling out in response to the lesson as it unfolds, and the group as a whole participates in opening hymn of invocation and in songs that mark the emotional high points of the play.¹⁹² Bringing the lesson to life, leaders of the church and individual congregants appear moved to take on the roles of Sophocles' characters in a fluid fashion.¹⁹³ The role of Oedipus, for example, is divided between two figures, the "Preacher" and "Singer Oedipus." In his own voice, the Preacher, thumbing through the leaves of a "leather-bound text" before he begins to speak, introduces the lesson with a brief summary of Oedipus' background ("Oedipus! Damned in his birth, in his marriage damned,/ Damned in the blood he shed with his own hand!...").¹⁹⁴ He then becomes "Oedipus" when the character speaks;¹⁹⁵ the "aged and blind" Singer Oedipus assumes Oedipus' singing parts. When the Singer Oedipus attempts

189 Breuer/Telson (1989) xvi-xvii.

190 Breuer/Telson (1989) 4; cf. Wetmore (2003) 103.

191 Breuer/Telson (1989) xv; as this prefatory note indicates, the audience is also conceived of as part of the congregation.

192 I.e., "The Jubilee: No Never," which is sung by the Choragos Quintet and the Oedipus Quintet, marking Theseus' affirmation that he "shall not refuse" Oedipus' desire to remain in Colonus (Breuer/Telson (1989) 24–5), "Numberless," at the end of Part One (31), and the "Closing Hymn: 'Let Weeping Cease'" (55).

193 The role-playing is explicitly flagged at the beginning of the second act, where the church's Deacon, who takes the part of Creon in the concluding scene of the first act, summarizes the action: "You remember that just before the intermission, I, as Creon, kidnapped the daughters of Oedipus..." (Breuer/Telson (1989) 35).

194 Breuer/Telson (1989) 5. The Preacher's summary of Oedipus' backstory and the "Recapitulation" presented by the Evangelist (7) are derived from the translation of *Oedipus the King* in Fitts and Fitzgerald (2002).

195 Throughout the play, the Preacher also retains his own voice as the congregation's leader, and at the play's conclusion he delivers as a sermon the messenger's speech describing Oedipus' final moments and miraculous disappearance (Breuer/Telson (1989) 53–5; cf. *Oedipus in Colonus* 1579–669).

to persuade the chorus, represented by group of singers called the "Choragos Quintet," about his need for "a resting place/ promised long ago," four more singers add their voices to his, creating the "Oedipus Quintet,"¹⁹⁶ thereafter, the Oedipus Quintet sings as a group, with the Singer Oedipus as its soloist. The third group of singers is the Ismene Quartet, composed of a soloist personifying Ismene and three other singers, one female and two male, who enter immediately after Oedipus is compelled by the Choragos to identify himself.¹⁹⁷ The "Evangelist" takes on the role of Antigone, while the "Deacon" and "Pastor" speak respectively for Creon and Theseus. Like the Preacher, none of these figures sings. The congregant who emerges briefly from the choir to take on the role of "Testifier Polyneices" also does not sing, but his spoken appeal for Oedipus' help is "interwoven" with verses sung by a soloist identified as the "Balladeer" and three "captains" of his army: Tydeus, Capaneus, and Parthenopaeus.¹⁹⁸

As in *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus and Antigone come to Colonus because of Apollo's prophecy. The Choragos Quintet initially forbid them entry to the "holy place" that belongs to the "daughters of darkness,"¹⁹⁹ but father and daughter are eventually welcomed into the sanctuary at Theseus' behest. After confrontations with Creon and Polyneices, Oedipus departs to die. Some sections, such as Ismene's description of the discord between Eteocles and Polyneices and Oedipus' hostile encounters with Creon and Polyneices, are compressed,²⁰⁰ and others, such as Theseus' intervention with Creon (*Oedipus at Colonus* 887–1043), are cut altogether. Theseus' role is minor until the final scene, where the Pastor, as Theseus, narrates Oedipus' final journey and then comforts his daughters with the instruction, "Mourn no more."²⁰¹ The Evangelist, as Antigone, plays a more prominent part than Sophocles' character in gaining acceptance for her father in Colonus, prescribing for him the rites of expiation that he performs to atone for his trespass on sacred ground.²⁰²

196 Breuer/Telson (1989) 13.

197 Breuer/Telson (1989) 14–16.

198 Breuer/Telson (1989) 37–41.

199 Breuer/Telson (1989) 12–13.

200 *Oedipus at Colonus* 310–460, 728–886, and 1253–1446; cf. Breuer/Telson (1989) 16–17, 25–9, and 36–42.

201 Breuer/Telson (1989) 50–1; cf. *Oedipus at Colonus* 1751–3.

202 Breuer/Telson (1989) 17–18; contrast with *Oedipus at Colonus* 466–509, where the chorus advises Oedipus to seek the Eumenides' favor with expiatory rites, and Ismene volunteers to perform them on her father's behalf.

Unlike the Sophoclean Antigone, however, she does not attempt to dissuade Polyneices from attacking Thebes after he is cursed by Oedipus.²⁰³

Most significantly, *The Gospel at Colonus* imports Christian conceptions of sin, redemption, salvation, and divine grace as frames for interpreting Oedipus' quest for acceptance in Colonus.²⁰⁴ Although the Preacher Oedipus, when interrogated by the Choragos, protests that he is innocent of parricide,²⁰⁵ Oedipus is cast from the beginning of the play as a sinner in search of "redemption."²⁰⁶ In his supplication to the "daughters of darkness," the Singer Oedipus couples his search for a "resting place" and "sanctuary" with the desire to "save" his "soul" and be "endowed with grace"; when he senses death approaching, the Preacher Oedipus cries out, "My soul is salvation bound!"²⁰⁷ In a major departure from Sophocles' dramaturgy, spectators witness the descent into the underworld of the members of the Oedipus Quintet, who surround the white grand piano occupying the center of the stage on a movable platform.²⁰⁸ Moreover, after Theseus comforts the grieving Antigone, the Singer Oedipus and his fellow vocalists are physically resurrected as the platform ascends while the whole choir joyfully sings.²⁰⁹ The prospect that Antigone and Ismene will return to

203 Breuer/Telson (1989) 38–42; contrast with *Oedipus at Colonus* 1414–46. Wilson (2012) 577 offers a persuasive analysis of the effect of the elimination of "Antigone's attempt to mediate between her father and her brother."

204 According to the stage direction (Breuer/Telson (1989) 17), the ceremony Antigone prescribes for Oedipus' purification, "while pagan, should evoke contemporary religious rituals." Preacher Oedipus' reference to the "holy water" needed for the ceremony invites a specific association with Christian ritual practice.

205 Breuer/Telson (1989) 20.

206 The Preacher pointedly uses the term "redemption" at the end of his introductory remarks (Breuer/Telson (1989) 6). Speaking in his own voice, he directs the congregation to the passage "in Exodus, where it speaks of [Oedipus'] death in a place/ called Colonus.../ And his redemption there," conflating the fictive "Book of Oedipus" with the actual Biblical book of *Exodus*. The account in *Exodus* of the Hebrews' efforts to enter the land promised to them by God is evoked elsewhere in the play, as in the Singer Oedipus' description of Colonus as a "sacred resting place/ Promised so long ago" (25; cf. 13).

207 Breuer/Telson (1989) 22 and 44. The Singer Oedipus once refers to Apollo (22), and the "daughters of darkness" (i.e., the Eumenides) are identified as "gods" when Oedipus atones for his trespass into their sacred place (e.g., 17, 23). Elsewhere, the singular "God" is deployed. Reference to "the kingdom of Heaven" in the opening hymn (6) further establishes the play's adoption of Christian eschatology.

208 Breuer/Telson (1989) 48–9. The white piano is revealed when Theseus welcomes Oedipus to Colonus (24).

209 Breuer/Telson (1989) 51–3. The action evokes the raising of Lazarus in the *Gospel of John* 11: 1–44. In the song performed by the entire choir that accompanies Oedipus' resurrection

Thebes is never introduced, and the play concludes on a happy, jubilant note. The last words of the Preacher's final sermon, which become the lyrics of the choir's closing hymn, affirm that Oedipus' physical resurrection symbolizes the spiritual salvation and eternal peace he has sought all along: "Now let the weeping cease/ Let no one mourn again/ The love of God will bring you peace/ There is no end."²¹⁰ The use of the generalized "no one" and the second person pronoun "you" underscore how, in the manner of a religious sermon, the entire play has presented the story of Oedipus as a universal lesson that aims to teach all who hear it about "mankind's frailty" and the "love of God."²¹¹

The Gospel at Colonus may also be the most controversial adaptation of *Oedipus at Colonus*, at least in the eyes of modern American theater critics and scholars.²¹² Its recasting of ancient Greek myth as a lesson based on Biblical scripture has struck some critics as awkward, because it pretends that the beliefs and ritual practices of contemporary Christianity are essentially the same as those of the ancient Greeks, and it disregards how some elements of modern Christian views concerning sin, spiritual salvation, and divine grace do not mesh well with the conceptions of human and divine agency that inform Athenian tragedies.²¹³ More serious unease has arisen because the setting of the play in a "black Pentecostal church" and the use of Gospel music have struck critics as an illegitimate arrogation of African-American religious and cultural traditions by white men for largely white audiences—an arrogation that is seen as perpetuating, albeit unintentionally, the great disparities of power, privilege, and financial resources that still trouble relations among the races in contemporary American society.²¹⁴ Others, however, have defended the integrity of Breuer and Telson's conception, most notably the actor Morgan Freeman, who played the Preacher in the original production.²¹⁵

These Seven Sicknesses, by American playwright and director Sean Graney, premiered at the Chopin Theater in Chicago, Illinois in September 2011 (under

(52), the verse "I was blind! He made me see!" recalls the lyrics of the famous Anglican hymn "Amazing Grace": "I once was lost, but now am found,/ Was blind, but now I see."

210 Breuer/Telson (1989) 55–6.

211 Cf. Wilson (2012) 577.

212 Wetmore (2003) 102–18 offers a detailed summary and analysis of the criticism that *The Gospel at Colonus* has garnered.

213 Wetmore (2003) 105–6 and 111–2; cf. Wilson (2012) 577 on the ways in which Oedipus' rejection of Polyneices is "particularly hard to integrate with the Christian setting: one may well wonder why a man who confesses his sins should be refused absolution."

214 Wetmore (2003) 103, 106, 117–8; see also Wilson (2012) 575–7.

215 Wetmore (2003) 109. Like Freeman, Wetmore argues that the "shared sense of catharsis is what links" *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Gospel at Colonus*. Cf. Kim/Garza/Kell (2015).

the title *Sophocles: Seven Sicknesses*) and was produced again in the spring of 2012 in at the Flea Theater in New York City. The play, designed for an evening-long performance, weaves together compressed adaptations of the seven extant tragedies of Sophocles into a loosely continuous narrative. The adaptation of *Oedipus at Colonus*, titled *In Colonus*, is the third and final act of the first part, *Honor Lost*, which begins with shortened versions of *Oedipus the King* (titled *Oedipus*) and *Women of Trachis* (titled *In Trachis*). The second part, *Honor Found*, comprises condensed adaptations of *Philoctetes*, *Ajax*, *Electra* and *Antigone*.

As the title suggests, sickness and disease are recurrent themes in Graney's adaptations. Framing each of the acts and providing continuity between the individual adaptations are short scenes in a hospital emergency ward, where overworked nurses—the play's chorus, who never dance and rarely sing—struggle to cope with one medical crisis after another.²¹⁶ The very first act begins with a victim of the plague at Thebes stumbling into the ward. He is met there and reassured by a calm and regal Oedipus, accompanied by his daughter Antigone, flowers in hand.²¹⁷ This action is turned on its head in the opening moments of *In Colonus*: Oedipus himself, now on the point of death after ten years of wandering “in the desert,” is dragged into the same ward (or one very much like it) by the distraught Antigone.²¹⁸

Worries about contagion permeate *In Colonus* and motivate significant alterations of Sophocles' plot, setting, and characterizations. The empathetic nurses dutifully receive Oedipus without reservation, unlike the hesitant chorus of *Oedipus in Colonus*. In contrast, Athens' king Theseus, entering the ward (also with flowers in hand) immediately after the arrival of Oedipus and Antigone, is ready to force the desperate pair to depart right away from the hospital—Graney's secularized analogue of the Eumenides' sacred grove. Theseus explains:

This is my city,
It needs to remain pure if we have any hope of salvation.
And you might be infected with the disease you left festering in Thebes.
We can't take that chance, sir.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ Danze Lemieux (2011) 135; Kovacs (2012) 20.

²¹⁷ Graney (2013) 3.

²¹⁸ Graney (2013) 59–60.

²¹⁹ Graney (2013) 61.

It is only because one of the nurses prevails on Theseus while he “speak[s] to his advisors” that Oedipus and Antigone are permitted to stay temporarily in the hospital,²²⁰ where they are soon visited by Creon, Ismene, Polyneices, and the Blind Seer—a blunt-speaking prophetess who also appears in both *Oedipus* and *Antigone*, taking the place of Sophocles’ Teiresias.²²¹ The welcome that Sophocles’ Theseus extends to Oedipus and his daughters is unconditional, but this is not the case in *In Colonus*. Graney’s Theseus requires the approval of his “counselors” to permit Oedipus first to stay temporarily in the hospital and then to be buried on Athenian territory.

In this final act of the part titled *Honor Lost*, it is abundantly clear that Creon and Polyneices have completely lost whatever honor they once had.²²² Arriving shortly after Theseus first departs to “speak to his advisors,” Creon shamelessly tricks Oedipus into believing that he will be welcomed back in Thebes as its king. Over Antigone’s strenuous objections he almost succeeds in convincing Oedipus to return with him, but for the arrival of the visibly drunken Polyneices, who, along with Eteocles, was introduced as a mute figure at the end of *Oedipus*, where he does nothing to intervene while his uncle forces his father and sisters into exile.²²³ With deceptive intentions that match Creon’s, Polyneices is on the verge of duping his befuddled father into joining his expedition with assurances that he will return Oedipus to the throne; at this point, he and Creon resort to fisticuffs. The true aims of both men are exposed when Ismene and then the Blind Seer appear. The latter explains that Oedipus is valuable to Creon and Polyneices only in death; she also informs him that he is destined to die in Colonus.²²⁴

The prophecy concerning his death in Colonus is well known to Sophocles’ commanding protagonist, but, as the revelations of the Blind Seer make plain, Graney’s Oedipus is completely unaware of it. Such is his mental frailty that Antigone must repeatedly remind him that he was born not in Colonus, but in Thebes,²²⁵ and he pathetically mistakes the thunder that heralds his death for “music.”²²⁶ Yet this feeble-minded Oedipus is also vain and self-centered, and the honor and dignity “lost” in this act is without doubt partly his. Because he

220 Graney (2013) 62.

221 Cf. Danze Lemieux (2011) 135.

222 Cf. Danze Lemieux (2011) 136; Kovacs (2012) 21, who also notes “the deepening sadness” in Creon that becomes manifest in the play’s final act, “Antigone.”

223 Graney (2013) 32–3.

224 Graney (2013) 72–4.

225 Graney (2013) 60, 74, 76.

226 Graney (2013) 73, 78.

so desperately clings to the fantasy of his own importance, Oedipus falls for Creon's and Polyneices' patently false promises concerning the "forgiveness, respect, [and] glory" awaiting him on his return to Thebes.²²⁷ When Antigone voices doubts about their implausible claims, he castigates her for "betraying" him and, after the ten long years of shared hardship, he is ready to abandon her almost instantly for Creon's company.²²⁸

In the eyes of Sophocles' Oedipus, Eteocles and Polyneices' failures are highlighted by the care and attention he receives from his daughters.²²⁹ Graney develops this distinction between the genders, using the female characters of *In Colonos* to underscore the "honor lost" by Creon, Polyneices, and Oedipus and, in particular, to locate the source of the loss of honor in the willingness to engage in deception or, in Oedipus' case, self-deception. In contrast, Antigone, Ismene, and the Blind Seer reveal in stages the unwelcome truth about Oedipus' helplessness and the machinations of his male kin. But the effectiveness of their truth-telling seems limited. Oedipus comes to realize his mistakes; he not only apologizes to Antigone for his disbelief, but also attempts to make amends for his cruelty to the Blind Seer, whom he brutally tortures in *Oedipus* during his quest for information about Laius' killer.²³⁰ The truth, however, can do nothing to deter Polyneices from leading his army against Thebes, even though Antigone confronts him with the horrifying fact that "we will all lose."²³¹

Truthfulness is also of little avail in the face of the icy pragmatism of Graney's Theseus. Theseus never engages in outright deception, although he is willing to mislead Creon and Polyneices into thinking that he will permit Oedipus to be buried on Athenian soil—a promise that he later rescinds, much to the consternation of Oedipus and his daughters.²³² Rather, Theseus becomes in Graney's hands a hardnosed politician with no use for pity and generosity. When he receives word that the council will "accept the gift of the dying Oedipus," Theseus orders the messenger to drag away his still breathing body by force; Antigone and Ismene ask his permission to "stay for a little," but he refuses and drives them away from Athens.²³³ Graney thus turns Theseus into a second Creon, with cold-hearted bluntness replacing slick

²²⁷ Graney (2013) 63.

²²⁸ Graney (2013) 64–5.

²²⁹ E.g., at *Oedipus at Colonos* 337–56.

²³⁰ Graney (2013) 74; cf. 9.

²³¹ Graney (2013) 77.

²³² Graney (2013) 75–6, 78.

²³³ Graney (2013) 79–80.

deceptiveness—a fact that is underscored by resonances between the final moments of *Oedipus* and *In Colonus*, the acts that begin and conclude *Honor Lost*. At the end of *Oedipus*, Creon callously thrusts Oedipus and his daughters (“your unloved skinny chickens”) from the city on the grounds that “Thebes longs to breathe clean air.”²³⁴ At the end of *In Colonus*, Theseus uses disturbingly similar language to order Antigone and Ismene out of Athens: “You are not welcome here . . . Move along, / you pallid girls. / You pollute my eyes.”²³⁵ Even if we imagine that Theseus and his prudent councilors keep Athens free of the physical disease “festering” in Thebes, it is not clear that they have escaped the spiritual sickness that has ravaged Thebes’ royal family. The honor lost in *In Colonus* appears to be theirs as much as anyone else’s.²³⁶

The influence of *Oedipus at Colonus* has also been detected in notable dramatic adaptations of *Oedipus the King*, including *Oedipe* (1659) by the French dramatist Pierre Corneille (1606–1684) and the identically titled drama dating to 1718 by the French author François-Marie Arouet, better known as Voltaire (1694–1778), as well as *Oedipus: A Tragedy* (1678), which was co-authored by the British playwrights John Dryden (1631–1700) and Nathaniel Lee (1653–1692).²³⁷ More recently, *A Particle of Dread (Oedipus Variations)* (2013) by the American playwright Sam Shepard (1943–) clearly draws on *Oedipus at Colonus* for its depiction of the close relationships between two sets of fathers and daughters, Oedipus and Antigone and their modern counterparts, Otto and Annalee. Adaptations of other ancient dramas concerned with Oedipus’ family likewise borrow on occasion from *Oedipus at Colonus*. A contemporary example is *Post-Oedipus* (2004), a surrealistic version of Euripides’ *Phoenician Women* by the American dramatist Steven Gridley. Gridley departs from Euripides in staging an encounter in which Antigone tries to dissuade Polyneices from meeting Eteocles in battle;²³⁸ the origin of the scene plainly lies in *Oedipus at Colonus* 1414–46.

Screen

The mid-1980s saw the production of two English-language screen versions of *Oedipus at Colonus*, one in the United Kingdom and the other in the

234 Graney (2013) 33. Ismene explains in *In Colonus* (69) that she and Antigone were eventually permitted to return to Thebes; she chose to do so, while Antigone remained with Oedipus.

235 Graney (2013) 80.

236 Cf. Danze Lemieux (2011) 136.

237 Markantonatos (2007) 235–6.

238 Gridley (2006) 58–9.

United States. The UK production is one of three made-for-television films of Sophocles' "Theban plays" (*Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, and *Antigone*) directed by the British director Don Taylor (1936–2003).²³⁹ Co-produced by the BBC and Films for the Humanities and Sciences, the films star the British actors Anthony Quayle (1913–1989, as Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus*), Michael Pennington (1943–, as Oedipus in *Oedipus the King*), Juliet Stevenson (1956–, as Antigone in *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone*), and John Schrapnel (1942–, as Creon in all three films). They were aired on BBC2 in three consecutive evenings in September 1986 and were televised in the United States by PBS television stations over the course of three weekends in 1988;²⁴⁰ they were subsequently released on DVD (most recently in 2008) and are now available on YouTube.²⁴¹ The scripts for the films are Taylor's translations of Sophocles' tragedies; they are not intended to be adaptations, but rather "straight" translations that adhere closely to the Greek texts. Shot in one take,²⁴² the film of *Oedipus at Colonus* is over two hours long, and very few (if any) of Sophocles' 1779 verses seem to be cut. At the same time, Taylor, described in one source as "an old-fashioned populist" who "was concerned to bring Sophocles out of the theatre and onto television for the appreciation of the 'masses,'"²⁴³ exhibits a fondness for colloquialisms and slang that struck at least one reviewer as alien to Sophocles.²⁴⁴

The US production is the film of Lee Breuer and Bob Telson's stage adaptation of Sophocles' play, *The Gospel at Colonus*, which was filmed at a live performance of the show in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1985. Like Taylor's BBC production, the film version of *The Gospel at Colonus* was intended for viewing on the small screen. Directed by the American director Kirk Browning (1921–2008), it starred Morgan Freeman (1937–) as the Preacher, Jevetta Steele (1963–) as Ismene, and Robert Earl Jones (1910–2006) as the Deacon Creon, all reprising their roles in the original performance at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1983.²⁴⁵ The Blind Boys of Alabama, who constituted the Oedipus Quintet in the original show, are also featured in the film. The film aired on

239 BBC Radio also aired two versions of *Oedipus at Colonus* in radio-teleplays of Sophocles' "Theban Cycle." The first used the translation in Fagles (1984) and was broadcast in February 1985; the second used the translation of Wertenbaker (1992) and aired in December 2006.

240 Wrigley (2012); Terry (1988).

241 Wrigley (2012).

242 Wrigley (2012).

243 Wrigley (2012), quoting a report in the British publication *Radio Times*.

244 Terry (1988).

245 Breuer/Telson (1989) xvi–xvii.

most PBS stations in the United States in November 1985 as part of the “Great Performances” series; in Los Angeles, however, the airing was delayed until January 1986 because of concerns that the telecast “might hurt the box office” of the live show at Los Angeles’ Mark Taper Forum, which ran in November and December 1985.²⁴⁶

It has also been argued that, in the 1967 movie *Edipo Re* (*Oedipus the King*), directed by the Italian director and writer Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–1975), and in the 1990 experimental film *Antigone / Rites for the Dead or Rites of Passion* by American filmmaker Amy Greenfield (1940–), “rudiments of the plot of *Oedipus at Colonus* are integrated into the wider narrative framework of the Theban legend.”²⁴⁷

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Oedipus at Colonus*

Markantonatos (2007) 231–55, provides an indispensable discussion of the reception of *Oedipus at Colonus* in many different media from antiquity to the present day, and this essay is deeply indebted to his discussion.²⁴⁸ Helpful overviews of the tragedy’s reception and influence are also available in Kelly (2009) 134–7, and (2014) 1301. More narrowly focused but equally useful studies of the tragedy’s reception are found in Edmunds (1996) 163–8, which examines its influence on Sophocles’ biographical tradition in antiquity, and Ryan (2010), which considers its impact not only on literature, music, and visual arts in the 18th century, but also on contemporary aesthetic philosophy and theories of “the sublime.” Moreover, Markantonatos (2007) 15–20, and Edmunds (1996) 164–6, argue, on the basis of late 4th-century BC inscriptions and an entry in the Byzantine encyclopedia *Etymologicum Magnum* (12th century AD), that Sophocles was worshipped after his death in a hero cult under the name of “Dexion,” and they suggest that Sophocles’ depiction of Theseus’ reception of Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus* may have influenced the identification of Sophocles as Dexion.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Margulies (1985).

²⁴⁷ Markantonatos (2007) 236–8. Pasolini’s *Edipo Re* is discussed in the chapter on *Oedipus the King* in this volume (see above, 292–7); about Greenfield’s film, see also below, 464.

²⁴⁸ The bibliography cited in Markantonatos (2007) 231 n. 1, is also indispensable.

²⁴⁹ The tradition reported in these ancient sources is that, when the cult of Asclepius was introduced in Athens during the last decades of the 5th century, Sophocles made his house available as a temporary site for the cult while the sanctuary on the Acropolis was under construction. The verb for “receiving” a god or a cult (whether in a civic or domestic

Although they are focused primarily on the reception of the figure of Antigone from other sources, most notably Sophocles' *Antigone*, Steiner (1984), Alonge (2008), and Duroux/Urdician (2010) will also be of interest to those who are curious about the reception of *Oedipus at Colonus*. After the premiere of his stage translation of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* at Dublin's Abbey Theatre in December 1926, the Irish poet William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) undertook in the following year the translation of *Oedipus at Colonus*, which opened in September 1927; readers interested in his process of translation as well as the finished project will want to review Yeats (2008).

The claim that Athenian dramas influenced the work of the British playwright William Shakespeare (1564–1616) is highly controversial, because the consensus of scholars is that Shakespeare knew no Greek and had no access to the translations of Athenian tragedies and comedies.²⁵⁰ This orthodoxy has been boldly, if not convincingly, challenged by Stagman (2010), who claims that Shakespeare drew inspiration for his *King Lear* (ca. 1605) from *Oedipus at Colonus* among other Aeschylean and Sophoclean tragedies. In particular, Stagman asserts that, in the last acts of the tragedy, Lear and his daughter Cordelia are modeled on Oedipus and Antigone in *Oedipus at Colonus*. Even if Stagman's arguments for *King Lear*'s direct debt to *Oedipus at Colonus* are found wanting, readers may be interested in the intertexts he discusses.²⁵¹ The immediate sources of Shakespeare's inspiration for *King Lear* are abundant and well documented,²⁵² and it does not seem necessary to believe that Shakespeare needed to look to *Oedipus at Colonus* for additional inspiration. On the other hand, it is not unthinkable that Sophocles' representations of blind Oedipus' estrangement from his sons and also his affection for his daughters could have had an indirect influence, through Seneca's *Phoenician*

setting) is δέχουμαι, and it is from this verb that the name Dexion (Δεξιων) is derived. In discussing this etymology, Edmunds draws attention to the repeated use of the verb δέχουμαι in *Oedipus at Colonus* to describe Oedipus' reception in Athens (e.g., at 4, 44, 487, 627, and 945) and also notes that Theseus specifically offers to welcome Oedipus into his house at 643, much as Sophocles "welcomed" Asclepius into his home. Garland (1992) 125 offers a more skeptical assessment of the reliability of the ancient anecdotes concerning the posthumous worship of Sophocles as Dexion.

250 D. Simpson (1986) 31 n. 6; Braden (2015) 377.

251 D. Simpson (1986) and Khare (1998) 182–4 also note parallels of plot and characterization in *Oedipus at Colonus* and *King Lear*, but do not make a case for the influence of the former on the latter, and Simpson (esp. 20–7) notes several ways in which *King Lear* differs from *Oedipus at Colonus*. Norwood (1960) 171 notes in passing, nonetheless, that "[t]he whole scheme of [*Oedipus at Colonus*] suggests a *King Lear*."

252 Muir (1985) xxiv–xxxix.

Women and Statius' *Thebaid* and many other intermediate sources, on Shakespeare's conception of Lear's and Gloucester's tragic relationships with their children.²⁵³

Selection of Further Readings (and Other Resources)

Literature

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Other Resources

The Open University's Research Project on Texts and Images of Ancient Greece in Modern Literature. Available at: www2.open.ac.uk/ClassicalStudies/GreekPlays.

²⁵³ D. Simpson (1986) 31 n. 6.

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PART 3

*The Heroines' Tragedies: Sisters, Daughters,
and Wives*



Antigone

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In a development that seems to be profoundly innovative when compared to former readings of the Theban myth,¹ Sophocles' 442/441 BC play on the daughter of Oedipus focused on two major motifs: the burial of Antigone's brother Polynices as a defence of natural and divine law, and her opposition to tyrannical authority and the merely human law dictated by Creon, the new lord of Thebes. After the conflict for the possession of Thebes between Oedipus' sons, Eteocles and Polynices, had ended, bringing war to the city and causing the death of the two brothers, Creon orders that funeral honors should be rendered to Eteocles, as a defender of the motherland, while the burial of the traitor Polynices is forbidden. This determination causes different reactions. First, the two sisters, Antigone and Ismene, confront each other in a dialogue that clarifies each of the girls' positions: guided by family values, the former is determined to disobey, while the latter shows herself to be more acquiescent to the king's orders, feeling fearful and impotent vis-à-vis the male power that rules the city. This is the moment that precedes the public announcement of the new King's edict, which will soon be disregarded by Antigone, as a Guard tells the sovereign. However, before Antigone—as the audience might expect—is caught in the act, this first piece of news seems to suggest the intervention of an anonymous, discrete, almost abstract entity which may mean—as the Chorus believes—divine intervention supporting the princess' choice. After an agon ("dispute") with the transgressor, Creon is confronted with other opinions, contrary to his own inclination: that of his son Haemon, who has a democratic view of a king's authority, and, through him, the disagreement of

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- 1 The myth of Thebes was certainly popular within the epic cycle, according to titles like *Thebais*, *Oidipodeia* and *Epigonoí*, which seem to be focused on the male lineage of the Theban royal house. This is the perspective that seems to have been adopted also by Aeschylus in his tetralogy on the same myth—*Laius*, *Oedipus*, *Seven against Thebes*, beside the satirical drama *Sphinx*. See Bañuls/Crespo (2006) 15–58 as well as the bibliography cited on the polemics that emerged apropos Sophocles' innovative intervention in his treatment of this episode of the Theban myth. As far as we may discern from extant sources, before Sophocles there had been no mention either of Creon's prohibition to bury Polynices, or, logically, of Antigone's infringement.

the Theban public opinion; and also Tiresias, the clairvoyant, through whom the gods again express their animosity towards the king. Creon's obstinacy resists all arguments. And when he finally reconsiders, in response to the insistence of the Chorus and to Tiresias' forebodings, it is all too late; he will pay with remorse for the three deaths he has caused: Antigone's, who in the meantime had committed suicide to regain her freedom; Haemon's, who had chosen to die with his lover; and the queen, Eurydice, unable to endure the pain of her son's death and the calamity that fell upon her family.

Uncompromising in her stand vis-à-vis the established authority, Antigone has become a paradigm of piety, from a religious standpoint, a model of compassion and devotion to the family; at an ethical and political level, an example of fearlessness in her denouncement of tyranny. One of the most important factors underlying Antigone's positions against the authority of the polis ("city") was her nature and condition as a woman; despite her natural fragility and lack of a civic status she was ready to confront traditional male power. Embodying the defence of family values, Antigone was able to step over the limits of her condition in order to raise her voice, an isolated and, maybe for some, even an objectionable voice, but certainly she was strongly determined to carry out her duty to confront Creon's recently established power. For the sake of her heroic purpose, she gave up all her life plans and expectations—marriage and children—which would complete her female curriculum, to yield, prompted by different stimuli, to the seduction of martyrdom and death. The heroicness of her choice was nonetheless fraught with obstinacy, and even aggressiveness, in her claims both as a member of the polis and as someone responsible for the continuity of her own family, which she aimed to defend.²

The assertiveness that gave Antigone her grandeur required an equivalent opponent, which took the form of Creon, the king, the man, the uncle, and the lord of the oikos ("house, family"). Creon's personality also includes a number of complex nuances: before being a dictator, he is a patriot, committed to restoring law and order in the city in the aftermath of a period of conflicts;³ prohibiting the burial of Polynices, the traitor, may be understood from the point of view of authority and in line with his duty to protect the polis. However, considering how his tentative assertiveness is mitigated by a degree of insecurity, it is worth noting

2 On the nuances of the *philia* ("friendship, relationship") bonds between Antigone and her brother, see Blundell (1991) 106–17.

3 The 'fratricidal war' topic, of which Thebes is a paradigm, even if it is more visible in other tragic versions of the myth—Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, or Euripides' *Phoenician Women*—, serves also as a background to Sophocles' *Antigone* and is a focal element in many rewritings.

the way how fate granted him the throne of Thebes through the death of his legitimate heirs, Eteocles and Polynices.

Behind the leader who claims to be a patriot, someone who is responsible for defending the city, there is also the man who wishes to secure his own power, which he feels to be controversial. In its dialectical and rhetorical balance, the central agon ("discussion") that leads to his confrontation with his niece (Antigone 441–525) has given rise to an interpretive doubt which underlies all the future rewritings of the tragedy: who is the play's true protagonist, Antigone or Creon? Both characters share this central role in Sophocles: each of them embodies one of the two conflicting positions, and is surrounded by a web of relationships that specifies, in distinct facets, the spectrum of each own's respective interventions. First and foremost, Antigone's determination and fearlessness are set in contrast with her sister Ismene's fearful hesitation: although united by family ties, they could not be more different as far as their personality is concerned. Antigone's brave assuredness also contrasts strongly with Eurydice's silence, which the wife and mother chooses as a response to Creon's heedlessness, before seeking refuge, just like Antigone, in the act of taking her own life. Antigone's life path progressively leads her to a state of isolation, distancing her both from the rules that govern the city and from the living people that surround her. As for Creon, his nature as a self-willed dictator who ignores all warnings is successively revealed and emphasized through a number of repeated confrontations: with the Guard, the armed wing of his authority, who, unlike Antigone, subserviently and acritically executes the tyrant's orders; with his son Haemon (Antigone 631–765), a young man torn between filial loyalty, his own prudent nature, and his deep feelings for his bride, Antigone, whom his father has unjustly condemned to death; with Tiresias, the clairvoyant (Antigone 988–1090), who, with divinely inspired wisdom, expresses before the king the gods' displeasure at his blind impiety; and, indirectly, with the public opinion of a silent, though discretely remonstrative Thebes (Antigone 683–723), which experiences the escalade of his increasingly autocratic power.

As the Chorus expresses in Stasimon 1—the Ode to Man—, despite the human talent that accounts for the city's progress and development and the authority of its leaders, what is at stake here is principally the danger posed by senselessness and excess. Higher than the 'political' day to day life stands that other harmony with the universal order, guided by the gods, which must be preserved above all human interests and concerns. A merciless punishment, like Creon's, awaits obstinately blind prevaricators. This is the philosophy proclaimed by the Chorus at the precise moment when the king of Thebes begins his escalade of excess and indiscretion. In line with the chorus' forebodings, as he became responsible, as a family man and master of his house, for so many deaths—his niece's, his son's, his wife Eurydice's—the king was inflicting the corresponding blows upon the royal house of Thebes, thus contributing to its decadence.

In Literature

In Antiquity, the Sophoclean version of the Antigone myth earned a huge popularity,⁴ beginning its journey as one of the most disseminated and productive myths not only in literature but under all sorts of artistic forms. A first sign of that popularity can be found in Greek theatre as early as 409 BC, with Euripides' interest in recuperating the same motif, despite his introduction of considerable renovations, in his *Phoenician Women*. Euripides also authored a tragedy titled *Antigone* (ca. 410 BC) of which not much is known besides some details described by Aristophanes of Byzantium in the *hypothesis* annexed to Sophocles' play, and a small number of extant fragments. For this Greek literary critic and grammarian (3rd–2nd centuries BC), the most outstanding element in Euripides' play was the enhanced role given to Haemon and his condition as Antigone's husband and the father of her child, Maeon (*schol.* Sophocles, *Antigone* 1350). As some authors claim, by making Haemon Antigone's accomplice in Polynices' burial, Euripides was releasing her from the isolation in which Sophocles had kept her. And perhaps Euripides' new elements also included the figure of Creon, the deceived tyrant who, having understood Haemon's disobedience, which had been dictated by a *deus ex machina* (perhaps Dionysus), finally forgave Antigone and acknowledged her son, Maeon, as the legitimate heir to the throne. The plot was thus given a romantic tone and a happy ending.⁵ Another sign is the spurious ending added to Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* by some stage director, acknowledging the popularity of the Sophoclean play.⁶ Later, during the 4th century BC (ca. 341 BC) Astydamos the Younger, a minor tragedian, produced an *Antigone* that seems to incorporate a *contaminatio*

4 This success earned Sophocles his appointment as a strategist in the military campaign launched to subdue the Samian uprising, in 440 BC (Aristophanes of Byzantium, *Hypothesis, Antigone* 1), in recognition of his merit as a playwright and a thinker of the *polis* ("city").

5 Aristophanes quotes this play by Euripides twice in *Frogs* 1182 and 1187 (fr. 157–8 Collard and Cropp, "Oedipus was, in the beginning, a fortunate man", "who later became the most wretched of creatures"), in a parody of the poet's prologues. Those had been happy times when Oedipus ruled over Thebes, having defeated the Sphinx, but they were followed by the usual list of misfortunes (exile, blindness, death). See Collard/Cropp (2008) 156–69.

6 The denial of the originality of the *Seven Against Thebes* closing scene has become consensual. In this scene, after the fratricidal duel and after the Chorus has expressed the intention of burying both corpses (1000–4), Antigone emerges to announce her decision to bury Polynices notwithstanding Creon's edict, proclaimed by the king's herald. Her late intervention and the disobedience announced have been considered a later addition, as a consequence of the popularity of Sophocles' creation; see, e.g., Taplin (1977) 169–91; Bañuls/Crespo (2006) 29–32 with an extensive bibliography; Sommerstein (2010) 90–3.

between the versions authored by Sophocles and Euripides. Innovatively, in this tragedy, Creon instructed Haemon to punish his bride for her disobedience; however, while pretending to carry out his father's orders, he spares her life and later she bears him a child. These motifs suggest that Astydamos might have wished to preserve, and further develop, a specific mark that is present in Euripides: the romantic connection between Antigone and Creon's son.⁷ Even comedy was interested in Sophocles' *Antigone*, a passage of which (*Antigone* 712–4) is parodied by Eupolis (fr. 260. 22–6) and Antiphanes (fr. 228. 3–7).⁸ In the 4th century BC, both Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 1373b 12–3 / *Antigone* 456–7, *Rhetoric* 1375b 1–2 / *Antigone* 456–8, *Rhetoric* 1415b 20 / *Antigone* 223, *Rhetoric* 1417a 32–3 / *Antigone* 911–2, *Rhetoric* 1418b 32 / *Antigone* 688–700; *Poetics* 1454a 1) and Demosthenes (*On the Crown* 18. 120, *On the False Embassy* 19. 246) abundantly refer to Sophocles' play in relation to the theoretical and practical art of oratory, with Demosthenes mentioning the insistent interest of famous actors in playing a part in a play which was invested with strong symbolism in a society undergoing a governance crisis.⁹

As far as Latin literature is concerned,¹⁰ Lucius Accius (2nd century BC), in a drama version that has been lost, seems to show some proximity to his most distinguished predecessor—Sophocles—emphasizing the tyrannical profile of the king. Publius Papinius Statius' epic rewriting, *Thebaid* (1st century BC), takes up the campaign of the seven against Thebes and the fratricidal duel, raising the issue of Polynices' burial (12. 173–463). His inclusion of Argia, Polynices' widow, as Antigone's accomplice,¹¹ enables him to portray the two law-breaking women dragging Polynices' body onto a pyre meant for Theban leaders where Eteocles' body happens to be burning; that is where the women are caught and made prisoners.¹² This confluence of traditions was

7 Perhaps the version narrated by Hyginus (*Fabula* 72) corresponds to Astydamos'.

8 Comic fragments are quoted from Kassel-Austin (1983–2001).

9 See Hall (2011) 57–9.

10 On the popularity of Antigone in tragedy performances in Rome, see Juvenal, *Satyr* 8. 229.

11 In Statius, it is Argia who takes the initiative, being followed by Antigone. Curiously, there seems to be a degree of rivalry between the two, Polynices' wife and his sister, both as regards his affection and in claiming the responsibility for their action (see *Thebaid* 12. 394–402). With Argia's sentimental reasons and her legitimacy as a wife, which she adduces before Creon, the issues of justice that animated Sophocles' Antigone remain in the background. In his turn, Seneca (1st century BC) took up the theme in *Phoenician Women*, a re-interpretation of the Euripidean original.

12 Perhaps through the influence of Statius, both Pausanias 9. 25. 2 and Hyginus, *Fabula* 72, choose the same version, with Polynices' body being carried to the pyre by the two women.

successfully resumed by Statius, who transformed the two women into victims of the tyrant's excesses, giving priority to the sentimental approach; the inclusion of Argia as an innovative element, a paradigm of conjugal love and faithfulness, is to be found in this author's influence in some medieval, Renaissance, and baroque versions.¹³

The interest shown during Antiquity, not so far from Sophocles' time, only increased with the passing of time, and the rewritings or re-interpretations of what has been perhaps the most productive Greek play multiplied. More intensively from the late 19th century on, throughout Europe and America, and, some years later, also in Africa and Asia, a significant number of well-known authors took up the Antigone myth again, both within the framework of philhellenic movements such as those emerging in France or Germany, or in the context of more individualized initiatives, though always closely connected with the political, social, and religious experiences of the different countries. Despite the predominance of drama versions, there are other, poetical and novelistic rewritings, besides also all the philosophical speculation on myth in general, and on this one in particular. Other forms of artistic expression—music, cinema, and other visual arts—were also engaged with the Antigone myth, with countless art works being produced in all those areas. The reasons for this success can be summed up with the help of the following words:¹⁴ "Perhaps this is because there might always be a Creon who, differently disguised, represents some kind of abusive power, some sort of authority deaf to conscience. In consequence, there might always be the need for an Antigone as a reminder of rights and responsibilities that should not be abdicated in the face of that power and authority, but should be bravely defended". This fight makes Oedipus' daughter a paradigm of what we now call 'human rights', in all their infinite varieties, which in turns promotes, with the ceaseless return to the paradigm, the discussion of universal and eternal values, on which each epoch develops its own reading and its own conceptualization.

Since it would be impossible to discuss all those versions, to which new ones are daily added, we will be considering only those that have become a reference and multiplied as 'new originals', beside the readings that clearly marked the semiotic multivalence of the motif.

Considering the reception of Sophocles' tragedy in the period between the Middle Ages and the 16th century, mention has been made of the influence of Seneca and most notably, in Antigone's case, of Statius, in the dissemination

13 Bañuls/Crespo (2008) 180 believe that no other version after Sophocles' was as influent as Statius' in the reception of the motif.

14 Lauriola (2014) 46.

of these myths during the Middle Ages—in a world where knowledge of the Greek language was limited.¹⁵ As examples, it is worth mentioning Canto 22 of Dante's *Purgatorio* ("Purgatory"),¹⁶ *Roman de Thèbes* ("Novel of Thebes"), by an unknown French author (ca. 1115)¹⁷ which influenced Boccaccio's *Teseida* ("Theseid") (1339), as well as the latter's famous treaty, *De claris mulieribus* ("On famous women") (1362), whose chapters 23 and 27 served as the main source for the heroine's portrait during the Renaissance.¹⁸ A new development occurred when, in 1502, Sophocles' text was first published in Venice by Aldus Manutius, serving as the source text for a number of translations into different vernacular languages and into Latin from 1533 to 1581.¹⁹ "However, one cannot talk about a general, direct influence of Sophocles' tragedy on the European creative consciousness before 1730, when the prose translation included in Pierre Brumoy's *Le Théâtre des Grecs* ("The theatre of the Greeks") was published".²⁰

With the Renaissance—and its re-discovery of Greek tragedy—drama was the preferred form in the dissemination of classical myths. "Since the Renaissance, Greek tragedy has been invested with sets of values and norms of behaviour whose symbolic power has intimated continuity with an idealized past, and has prompted tragedy's appropriation, negotiation and re-invention."²¹ It is therefore not surprising that *contaminatio* became part of that reception.

15 Pascual/Morales (2008) 128.

16 Where Antigone, Ismene and Argia could be found.

17 In a chivalric context, quite different from the old one, Antigone and Ismene attend the combats and witness the death of their 'friends' during the attack on Thebes. With the death of Parthenopeus—who, in this version, is in love with Antigone—at Eteocles' hands, we know nothing about the young woman's future. Claiming the right of the dead to be buried, in general—not just Polynices' in particular—also falls to Argia and the Argive women, in line with Statius' version. In Dante and Boccaccio, Argia keeps her protagonism as regards Polynices' burial. This means that, in this period, Antigone has no connection with her brother's funeral rites, which seem to be more consonant with a wife's role; as for Creon, he has a somewhat unimportant role in this episode. With the recuperation and dissemination of the Sophoclean text, Argia is progressively erased from the rewritings of this myth as Antigone becomes more actively engaged in the action.

18 Pascual/Morales (2008) 128. Even if he recognises that it would be impossible to produce an exhaustive list, Steiner (1995) 240 also adds *Salut à sa dame* ("Greeting his lady"), by the Provençal troubadour Arnaut de Mareuil (12th century), written around the same time, which strongly enhances Antigone's beauty, and Christine de Pisan's *Cent histoires de Troie* ("One hundred stories of Troy") (13th century).

19 See Bañuls/Crespo (2008) 221–3.

20 Pascual/Morales (2008) 128.

21 Michelakis (2001) 241.

In the 16th century, one of the first *Antigones* of modernity (1580),²² titled *Antigone ou la piété*²³ ("Antigone, or piety"), was authored by the French tragic poet Robert Garnier (ca. 1545–1590), who witnessed the civil, political, and religious wars that plagued France in the 16th century;²⁴ his Antigone was inspired by a Christianized reading of the myth which, as the title suggests, enhances filial piety, one of the specific values of tragedy, and one that is quite relevant to Christian thought. Therefore, such topics as virginity, martyrdom, secret burial, sacrificing oneself for love and accepting it gladly materialize a Christian-inspired approach to the traditional version. More than any other behavioral traits in the traditional life path of Oedipus' daughter, her dedication to her parents is of paramount importance, a dedication which accompanied and 'protected' her until the end of her days, also anticipating another life sacrifice, the one required by Polynices' death. In the face of so much grief for her family, Antigone gives up her love for Haemon even before Creon's edict,²⁵ an extremely significant decision that signals the loss of her will to live.

In the 17th century (1638), in a France ruled by an absolutist, despotic monarchy,²⁶ the poet and playwright Jean Rotrou (1609–1650), adopting a *contaminatio* between Statius, Seneca, and Sophocles, writes a five-act tragedy he titled *Antigone*,²⁷ in which he basically discusses power. Among its deviations from the classical model is the inclusion of new characters,Adraste, Polynices' father in law, Argie, his wife (which gives Polynices other affective bonds and

22 Other plays of the time were more or less directly inspired by Sophocles' *Antigone*; e.g., Giovanni Rucellai's *Rosmunda* (1514), see Bañuls/Crespo (2008) 213–21; or Giovanni Paulo Trapolini's *Antigone* (1581), *idem* 225–6.

23 Garnier (2012). Fraisse (1974) 15–6 stresses the fact that "until the 19th century Antigone belongs more to hagiography than to the dramatic genre". In his play, Garnier combines Statius and Seneca with Sophocles.

24 This crisis emerged as a consequence of the conflict between Calvinists and Catholics, and it involved the problem of dynastic succession between the Valois and the Guisa lineages, in a possible parallel with Sophocles' Thebes.

25 In Steiner's opinion (1995) 241, Thomas May's *The tragedy of Antigone, the Theban princess* (1631), performed in London, follows along the same line as Garnier; Bañuls/Crespo (2008) 230 identify the same tendency in *Antigone ou la piété fraternelle* ("Antigone, or fraternal piety"), by D'Oigny du Ponceau (1787).

26 This is also the time of the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes* ("Quarrel of the ancients and the moderns"), an intellectual movement opposed to a conservative, State-sponsored theatre production that serves the interests of the monarchical ideology, in contrast to innovative approaches. Rotrou's play is exactly about the moment where doubts concerning the absolutist exercise of power start to emerge.

27 Rotrou (1882). Fraisse (1974) 26 identifies this play as the first performance of an Antigone on the French scene, since Garnier's creation was impracticable as a text for the stage.

provides his Argive relatives with an active role in the conflict with Creon), besides a number of young Thebans. Jocasta has a role to play in the opening scene, where she enters the stage accompanied with her two daughters and postponing the Sophoclean divergence between the two sisters, Antigone and Ismene, to Act III, scene v. When the play starts, no fratricide has yet occurred, which means that the mother will witness the extreme act; the pacifying intervention she is allowed to have as regards her sons' conflict will be frustrated (in the footsteps of Euripides' *Phoenician Women*). Argie, in her turn, regains the role of Antigone's accomplice that she had in Statius.²⁸ More than fighting for respect for a higher justice—the justice that secures every human creature the right to be buried—, in Rotrou's version, Oedipus' daughter fights for family cohesion and the rights of the *oikos* ("house, family"), which involves her duties and the private emotions she feels for each of her relatives.²⁹ Defending their common blood is what gives her the strength to fight 'tyranny' with the weapons of 'virtue'.

Later, in his *Thébaïde ou les Frères ennemis* ("Thebaid, or the enemy brothers") (1664)—which was much influenced by Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, and Rotrou—the French playwright Jean Baptiste Racine (1639–1699) includes allusions to the Antigone theme, in what is really a secondary plot. In this case, although he preserves the motif of Antigone and Haemon's passion, the French playwright creates a new, original rivalry between father and son; after the death of Haemon, who had been sent by the king as Polynices' ally in the duel, Racine has Creon compete with his own son for beautiful Antigone, or, in other words, he gives him the role of a Machiavellian candidate to power who, with his scheme of seduction, aims at removing the last obstacle from his race for power. Indeed, it is with joy that the king hears the news of his nephews' death, as well as his own son's, seeing each one of them as a rival to his ambitions. Thus, if Antigone has the opportunity of saying 'no', her motivation is not the fact that Creon forbids Polynices' burial, but rather her refusal of a marriage proposal that she understands as being a Machiavellian result of a competition for power. More than the reasons of State,³⁰ Racine is especially interested in portraying the obscurities of the human soul.

28 Argie, the widow, or even Haemon, the lover, tend to replace Ismene as allies in Antigone's game of dedication, or of life and death.

29 Steiner (1995) 201–3 and Pociña/López (2010) 366 associate this Antigone to a sentiment of incestuous love for Polynices, which, to some extent, Fraisse (1974) 73–4 also identifies.

30 Fraisse (1974) 100–1 underscores the disadvantage of this type of approach at the height of French absolutist monarchy.

With its preference for the 'gallant' taste, the 17th century saw in the Antigone theme an austere, gloomy element which did not appeal to the general public, with the result that there was no enthusiastic adhesion to the myth.³¹

The reception of the Antigone motif continues during the 18th century, especially in the second half, by influence of the previous period of French theatre, i.e., Jean Racine and Pierre Corneille's tragedies. However, no original work emerges in France.³² In Italy, the poet, playwright and actor Vittorio Alfieri (1749–1803) produces a very successful *Antigone* in 1776 (performed in 1782 and published in 1783).³³ In this play, the predominant feeling is Antigone's horror at her incestuous origin, which leads her to a kind of expiatory exile in the company of her blind, defeated father. Like in Racine, Creon is the author of a political plot to gain power: he is the one who encourages his nephews to fight a duel, entertaining the expectation that their death will free the road of power.³⁴ And what is more, the same Machiavellian attitude leads him to push Antigone into disobedience, as this would give him a pretext to eliminate the last obstacle to absolute, undisputed power. As an alternative, under the guise of magnanimity, the king suggests that Antigone should marry his own son, Haemon, which is another way of crushing his niece's resistance and gain legitimacy for the dynasty he himself represents. With countless details that transform the tyrant into a cunning, Machiavellian politician, a manipulator of hatred, Alfieri elaborates on a theme that would later re-emerge in other rewritings about Creon's struggle, which is also caused by his own insecurity vis-à-vis a power whose undisputable legitimacy he himself cannot acknowledge. It is, first and foremost, the insecurity and decadence of power that spurs the excess of tyranny. The romantic element, on the other hand, is quite strong, but Haemon and Antigone's love encounters two powerful enemies, their respective fathers, which is an innovation in this context: the animosity of Oedipus' shadow and Creon's attitude, after his niece's disobedience. Love thus becomes inseparable from death. This version was a case of quick and cross-cutting popularity.³⁵

31 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 317 note, for example, that in Great Britain *Antigone* was not performed in the 17th and 18th centuries, except for some occasional performances of Italian opera versions such as Francesco Bianci's *Antigone* (1796).

32 See Fraisse (1974) 29–31.

33 Alfieri wrote another play on the same myth, *Polinice* (1782).

34 Ismene is absent in Alfieri's play, as often happens in Antigone rewritings, and her role is taken up by Argia.

35 Fraisse (1974) 66 mentions Jeanne Champein and A. Duhamel's *Antigone(s)* (1834) as having been directly inspired by Alfieri, and he stresses the motif of the parental opposition to Haemon's love. On the other hand, Vilanova Martín (1999) 478–80 highlights Alfieri's

It has been stressed that German drama, which had hitherto been very much influenced by French theatre as regards the reception of classical models, underwent a thorough reform in the 18th century, seeking to free itself from mediations through a direct dialogue with the originals.³⁶ This project would lead to a search for the genuine features of classical tragedy, along with its cultural and aesthetic function, in line with Aristotelian theory. The role of translation,³⁷ as in the case of Johann Christian Friedrich Hölderlin's (1770–1843) rendering of *Antigone* (1804),³⁸ was of paramount importance then. However, the Sophoclean theme begins to raise a genuine interest in Germany after a musical version of *Antigone*,³⁹ translated by Ch. Donner,⁴⁰ is performed in Potsdam in 1841. This performance “is widely accepted to have signalled the emergence of regular performances of Greek drama on the stage and to have established the domination of the play in the nineteenth-century European

highly relevant influence on Juan Cruz Varela's *Argia* (1824); this was the first rewrite of the theme in Argentina after the country became independent from Spain (1816; see Fradinger [2011a] 68), and it became quite relevant within the movement for the autonomization of the Argentinian national theatre, with a strong influence on the future development of the Antigone motif.

36 Scheidl (1995) 1105.

37 It is important to note that in the United Kingdom quality translations were also starting to be produced; one of these was Thomas Stanley's (1708); see Hall/Macintosh (2005) 154. The same scholars (2005) 318 acknowledge the fact that this movement, which had been started in Germany, was definitely reflected in the United Kingdom.

38 There existed already a German version of *Antigone*, based on Martin Opitz' 1636 translation. Hölderlin basically used the Italian version, known as Iuntina (1555; cf. Steiner [1995] 106), which was extremely defective. Its poor quality, added to the poet's limited knowledge of Greek, resulted in what might more aptly be termed an adaptation rather than a genuine translation. To those circumstances one may also add the fact that the translator decided to highlight some particular aspects. Although important, these were only implied in the source text, which means that he produced an ‘interpretive’ version. He was strongly criticized, namely by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (who staged the play, in 1809, at the Weimar theatre) and Friedrich Schiller: see Steiner (1995) 87–8. Only as late as mid-20th century did some noted Hellenists, like Karl Reinhardt and Wolfgang Schadewaldt, attempt to rehabilitate the quality of Hölderlin's translation.

39 Scheidl (1995) 1107.

40 See below, 450. This translation was academically more rigorous, more faithful to the original, and, further, it rendered the meter of Greek verse into German; it therefore served the aim of reencountering the ancient models on their terms. On the other hand, the rendition produced by Hölderlin, the lyric poet, was based on a higher interpretive freedom and was therefore quite different from the Sophoclean original.

repertoire.”⁴¹ And it has been recognized that the philosophical discussion of the play at the time was due to the impact of this performance in particular.⁴²

In the 19th century, Hellenic tradition in general, and this tragedy in particular, attracted the interest of Europe in the drama format, a situation that reached a climax in the following century. This fact has been stressed by several scholars: “The recreation of figures of the classical world, and Antigone in particular, was given new impetus after the 19th century, when the dissemination of translations from the vernacular, together with the process of ‘re-theatricalization’, of ‘re-pristination’ of theatre, which makes authors look at Greek tragedies, now made more accessible to those who did not know the text in its original language.”⁴³ While French examples in this century are not very expressive,⁴⁴ the Hispanic predecessors of the 20th century *Antigones* are found in Spain, in this very century, and they did become really significant. This is the case of *Historia de la Nueva Antigona. Dedicada a la Reyna Nuestra Señora Doña María Isabel de Braganza* (“History of the new Antigone. Dedicated to Our Lady the Queen María Isabel de Braganza”) by Luis Fris Ducós (Madrid, 1817), about which not much is known, and *Antígona y Hemón* (“Antigone and Haemon”), by Pedro Montengón y Paret (published in Naples, 1820), where the most clearly visible topic is the love within the couple, in a recreation of Hyginus’ version.⁴⁵ English playwright Edward Fitzball’s (1792–1893) version, *Antigone or The Theban Sister*, was performed in 1821, as “a five-act tragedy in blank verse (...) archaizing in style (...), replete with archaic diction.”⁴⁶ Rather than a preference for rewrites, the major tendency during this century seems to be the return to classical drama performed in similar conditions to those of Classical/ancient theatre.⁴⁷ The same happened in the USA.⁴⁸

41 Macintosh (1997) 286. Steiner (1995) 21 identifies a void in the 18th century as concerns the return to the theme.

42 Steiner (1995) 23. On this philosophical discussion of the play, see below, 404–6, 409–10.

43 Morenilla (2015) 107–8.

44 Fraisse (1974) 37.

45 These were perhaps the first rewritings of the Antigone myth in the Iberian Peninsula. See Bañuls/Crespo (2008) 257–61.

46 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 274.

47 Corbier (2010) 73.

48 Macintosh *et alii* (2005) 308. Based on the information provided by Domis Pluggé on the staging of Greek plays in American Colleges and Universities between 1881 and 1936, the authors were able to establish that *Antigone* was one of the favourite, with a total of 75 performances among the 349 that were identified.

Besides the drama versions—which were certainly the most representative ones—inspired by the Labdacians’ myth especially from the 19th century on, there was in France a narrative version in the epic mode, in six books—even if interspersed with dialogues expressing the major tensions between the characters. This version is Pierre-Simon Ballanche’s (1776–1847) *Antigone* (1814).⁴⁹ In this narrative Tiresias and his daughter Daphne, exiled in Asia after the succession of disasters that befell the Theban royal house, tell Priam’s family about Oedipus’ journey through life, Jocasta’s suicide, Haemon’s love for Antigone, and the war near Thebes, culminating with the fratricide of Eteocles and Polynices. This text generally enhances the political element of the myth, with some biblical traces, which enables Ballanche to criticize Napoleon’s tyranny and to uphold the values of Christian-inspired freedom, attainable through ethics.⁵⁰ According to the author’s words to the Duchesse d’Angoulême, to whom he dedicates the book, Antigone is “le plus parfait modèle d’une vie de dévouement et de sacrifices: son nom est devenu le nom même de la piété filiale” (“the most perfect model of a life of devotion and sacrifice: her name has become the very name of filial piety”). Antigone will therefore be the object of Tiresias’ attention—and he tells about the traditional steps of her mythic existence: exile in the company of her ailing father, the hardships of her travelling condition, her concern with the stability of her family, and, lastly, her premature death (13). On the other hand, Creon, with whom Antigone has no confrontations, is gradually characterized, since Oedipus ascends to the throne of Thebes, as someone who thirsts for power and who resents the competition of a stranger (28–9). These are the two major themes—Antigone’s sacrifice and Creon’s thirst for power—that sustain the action of this 19th-century Antigone, in the confrontation between the generous virtue of a chaste young girl and male ambition, which condemns humankind to a never-ending cycle of conflict and decadence. Ballanche’s Antigone “culminates in Kierkegaard’s ‘virgo mater’ and Charles Maurras’s Antigone who stands up for the ‘vierge mère de l’ordre.’”⁵¹

49 All page numbers are from Ballanche (1814).

50 According to Fraisse (1974) 6–7, Ballanche was the one who first transferred the old subject to a totally new context, exploring its potentialities as an expression of contemporary meaning, instead of simply producing an ‘imitation’ of the mythic narrative. He wrote for a France that was witnessing the decadence of the founder of a great empire, Napoleon, after his unsuccessful campaign against Russia.

51 “The virgin mother of order”; Urdician (in press). Pianacci (2008) 11 identifies a first adaptation of Antigone in novel form also in 20th century Argentina: Roberto Payró’s (1885) *Antígona*, a “novella with a sentimental tone” published as a feuilleton in a daily Buenos Aires newspaper.

This comment makes it necessary to stress the importance of Antigone for 19th century philosophical thought, especially for German Romanticism, as a consequence of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), Johann Christian Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843) and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling's (1775–1854) meeting on the occasion of the Tübingen theological seminar—now known as the *Älteste Systemprogramm des Deutschen Idealismus*—in the last decade of the 18th century. The courses taught there generated a new hermeneutical reflection on the deep meaning of the Sophoclean original.

In his treatises *Phenomenology of Spirit*⁵² and *Aesthetics*⁵³ (1818–1819), the German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel reflected on the issues raised by the Antigone myth and its tragic version, from a dichotomous perspective—i.e., conflicts such as natural law vs. State law, legislator's power vs. customary morals, family and community, rights of the living and rights of the dead, male/female tensions. With respect to his assessment of the Antigone myth, the most innovative element in Hegel's thought is his revision of the role of Creon. In the dispute between uncle and niece, both put forward equally valid arguments regarding the defence of the State's values as well as the values rooted in human nature. None of the two is the sole holder of reason or of truth. That is why the destruction of which both are victims—as a consequence of their claims for exclusivity—creates the possibility of a new awareness of the principles at stake, as well as a kind of a more amiable and understanding synthesis: this is the moment “where Hegel attempts to articulate the paradox of the ‘unity that divides;’ preserving two opposite categories required by dialectics;⁵⁴ at the same time a “tragic conciliation, that is, the return of moral powers to their true harmony” has also been mentioned.⁵⁵ The increasingly stronger accusation of guilt directed at the Theban tyrant, notably after Statius' version, is toned down by a return to a certain balance, or at least to a greater degree of ambiguity, which, after all, was present in Sophocles' Creon.

For his part, the Danish thinker Soron Kierkegaard (1813–1855) focuses his speculation on Antigone's grief, in his essay *Either/Or* (1843; Part I), as a reflection of his own life experience. The young woman's isolation is a consequence of her exclusive knowledge (Ismene is absent in Kierkegaard) of a condition

52 Specifically on Antigone 5. a.

53 Specifically on Antigone 3. 3. a; this is the most important of Hegel's works on the subject.

54 Steiner (1995) 57.

55 Fraisse (1974) 106.

which the others (maybe even Oedipus and Jocasta) do not know about: her deformed, incestuous origin, which is the reason for the terrible anxiety that afflicts her and which she keeps secret within her innermost self.

With time, and through Creon's edict, the 'necessity' factor was added to the young women's 'fate': "Had Creon not forbidden Polynices' burial, had fatum not encountered a contingent reason, an Antigone's individual existence could have flourished into happiness. There is nothing intrinsic in her character that predetermines her fate."⁵⁶ The silence she feels forced to keep—to defend her father's honor and the spiritual survival of the house she belongs to—becomes the cause of her destruction, because it withdraws her from other affections, such as Haemon's, which she cannot fully share if she wishes to keep her secret. Tragedy hits this Antigone from her innermost core, not from an outside context. Therefore, burying Polynices, which causes her death, also represents freedom for her. "In Kierkegaard, Antigone is a phantasmagoria, a reflection on innocent guilt and on the transmission of original sin to each individual Christian, which becomes divorced from Sophocles' original intention."⁵⁷

The 20th century illustrates how socio-political readings are prevalent when it comes to returning to the Antigone myth. In the face of the tensions underlying World War I, the fratricide conflict between Eteocles and Polynices became emblematic, and the figure of Antigone a paradigm of reconciliation and protest. This is the time when solidary Antigone, a symbol of piety, gives way to a resistant one, i.e., an Antigone who fights against unjust power.⁵⁸ Oedipus' daughter definitively becomes the voice of the weak against the tyranny of the powerful. The object of her fight can then expand from a single dead body to collectively encompass all war victims; her relationship with this 'object', which she must defend, can be translated into relationships of blood, ideology or nationality. This facet of hers definitely wins a wide consensus.

In this century, drama versions continue to develop, now with a definite vigour, the previously established interpretive lines: the Christianization of the myth, which equals Antigone to a martyr, or even to Christ, its historiographical configuration projecting onto her the conflict or the political choices of each moment, inside or outside Europe, the expression of social tensions such as women's condition, or personal tensions such as frustrated love, or even the demystification of its tragic character in parodic versions. A whole set of new

56 Steiner (1995) 80.

57 Pascual/Morales (2008) 132.

58 Fraisse (1974) 16.

concerns dressed in ancient garb are often able to escape the notice of acritical censure.⁵⁹

In the midst of World War I, creativity in drama followed a parallel path to that of philosophical thought, voicing the symbolic potential of the Theban myth in order to express the current crisis. The frequency with which new treatments of the myth were being produced in different literatures and in conflicting fields is not surprising. In France, in his *A l'Antigone éternelle* ("To eternal Antigone") (1916), the novelist Romain Rolland (1866–1944) calls for urgent female resistance on behalf of a truce in a world where, under some kind of collective madness, death and destruction were being imposed by men. At about the same time, the German poet and playwright Walter Hasenclever (1890–1940) was revitalising Antigone as a symbol of love (1917), and, in its name, also the symbol of a resistance that faced both the war and the authoritarianism of the State. From a more universal perspective, Hasenclever saw Antigone as someone who was prepared to sacrifice her life for the common good, a kind of peace-heralding Christ. Even if in the 19th century Antigone did not enjoy the attention of German playwrights to the extent that might be expected, Hasenclever's text, and notably its staging, was a major contribution towards changing this situation.⁶⁰ Besides the influence of the political moment, this *Antigone* exhibits the marks of Expressionism, which "determined the play's language and symbols, its 'idea', and even its dramatic coherence."⁶¹ In line with the main objectives of its message—peace and fraternity—Hasenclever takes up, in his own fashion, two of Sophocles' motifs: Antigone's famous

59 In parallel with the new rewritings stimulated by the political situation in Europe, the performance of the old originals continued to be a way to develop the audiences' taste and interest for Greek theatre. That is exactly what happened in 1915 in the United States, with the commitment of actress Margaret Anglin, who, as theatre director, staged Sophocles' *Antigone*, among other Greek plays, at the Greek Theatre of the University of California at Berkeley; see Hartigan (1995) 27. In New York, the play was staged only some years later, in 1923, at the Forty-Eight Street Theatre, with Anouilh's version being performed on Broadway in 1946 (Hartigan (1995) 112). It must be noted that Sophocles' play did not really engage the audience's attention when compared to other tragedies that enhanced human passions and their consequences. The political context did not help make much sense of either Sophocles' original or Anouilh's rewrite, and therefore the reviews and comments on the performances were not enthusiastic. Only two decades later, in the 1970s, did *Antigone* performances start to multiply: 1971, Sophocles' *Antigone*, by the Repertory Theatre of Lincoln Center; 1973, *The island*, by Athol Fugard, *Antigone Africanus*, by Joseph Walker; see Hartigan (1995) 114–5. Towards the end of the 20th century, Antigone re-emerged, both as an isolated play and as included in the Theban trilogy, and it was performed all over the country: see Hartigan (1995) 116–8.

60 Scheidl (1995) 1108.

61 Scheidl (1995) 1109.

words in defence of love—*my nature is for love, not hate* (Sophocles, *Antigone* 523)—and Creon's repentance, in an effort to uphold the great universal laws that can save Humanity. The role of the chorus in this production has been stressed:⁶² it is composed of the Theban populace, who express themselves, now individually now in unison, producing an overall effect of turbulence, or a riot; the people have a central role, conditioning Creon's and Antigone's attitudes, for the future of Humanity is what is at stake.⁶³

Years later, the drama reception of *Antigone* in 20th century France undergoes some radical changes and becomes extremely emblematic. The success of the productions staged during the first half of the 20th century will have a decisive impact on the rewriting of this myth all over post-war Europe.⁶⁴

In 1948, in the aftermath of the war, and this time on the German side, Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) presented his *Antigonemodell* ("the *Antigone* model"). The predominant tone in this play is expressed in class struggles and fights for economic interests, in very apparent consonance with the immediate social reality. The action takes place in 1945, exactly in the last days of the Third Reich agony. The German replicas of *Antigone* and *Ismene*—who emerge, in the prologue, from an anti-raid shelter in Berlin—, are destined to witness the torture and execution of their brother, sentenced to death by the SS as a traitor to the Nazi regime. They are, therefore, the paradigm of the victims of tyranny at the moment when it collapses. Behind this sentence is Creon (Hitler)'s initiative to declare war against Argos (the U.S.S.R.) with the objective of plundering their mineral resources, which transforms the campaign against Thebes into a political and economic conflict. In this fight, the tyrant has the support of Eteocles, who dies in battle—a patriot, as he is considered by the king—while Polynices escapes, tormented by the fight and the death of his brother—a traitor, in Creon's view.⁶⁵ Hesitant as to whether they should intervene—although one of them believes it is their duty to—the two women end up denying their relationship to their brother and declare, for safety's sake, that they do not know the prisoner.⁶⁶ For the city of Thebes, the outcome of the war is not victory and freedom, but rather defeat, which brings with it the

62 Steiner (1995) 213.

63 Fraisse (1974) 123.

64 See below, 454–8.

65 Thus, the usual fratricide duel is replaced by a campaign where the two brothers fight on the same side, with Creon being responsible for Polynices' death. In this war, Thebes / Germany is the aggressor rather than the place under attack.

66 This anti-heroic version of the opening scene in Sophocles', which confronts the two sisters—mirroring the fear experienced in that epoch—was later replaced by Brecht (1951) with an opening monologue spoken by Tiresias, which synthesizes the main topics of the play.

death of Megareus, the tyrant's son and heir, and, with it, the end of his project. And when Creon decides to give up and annul his edict, his intention is to win Haemon over to his side, expecting obedience from him and entertaining a hope of salvation for the endangered city. But it proved to be too late since Haemon and Antigone had already sought refuge in suicide. To heroiness this version seems to oppose the triumph of the fear that raged in Berlin at the time, on the one hand, and on the other, as regards the tyrant, the sheer utilitarianism of the means he believed he possessed.

Brecht's influence had a major impact on a number of rewritings of the theme. In 1967, for example, Brecht's play was adapted by Judith Malina, co-founder, with Julian Beck, of the experimental Living Theatre in New York, when she was in prison for political dissension. The United States were then being swept by internal movements for the defence of Black people's rights, and, externally, by the Vietnam war. Instead of the prologue, Malina created a dance suggestive of the war between Thebes and Argos: "In a political gesture designed to provoke comparisons with the contemporary Vietnam War, the audience of Malina's *Antigone* was forced to enter the dramatic action, functioning as members of the Argive army that was attacking Thebes"; the actors' modernist costumes, which made them look like the audience, were an important contribution to this effect.⁶⁷ The play remained on stage for 20 years as part of the Living Theatre repertoire.

Just outside the European borders, in 1972, Turkish playwright Kemal Demirel (born 1955) wrote a version of *Antigone* on the occasion of the Ankara State Theatre 25th anniversary commemorations. As in Brecht, the context is that of a social and economic crisis, associated with mineral extraction, a key factor in the sustainability of the State, which is presided by Creon. An opening scene between the two brothers establishes the contrast between Polynices, a defender of the exploited, whom the people love, and Eteocles, who confronts him and makes him a political prisoner. This conflict will lead to the death of both brothers. As a consequence, Polynices' burial provided by his sister Antigone has the contours of a popular uprising. Haemon himself, in the role of a prudent engineer, gains some dynamism as a champion of the miners who

67 According to the information extracted from the Oxford Archives (<http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk>). Hartigan (1995) 114 mentions the enthusiastic reception of Malina's performance as *Antigone*, which showed "courage and pathos . . . unchanged and effective." On the other hand, he stresses the non-conformism of the performance: "Elements reflective of Japanese Noh drama were tamed by Brechtian echoes, so that (...) exaggerated gestures, bodies as props, and "grubbie hippie street clothes" costuming marked the production as typical of the Living Theatre."

have been subjected to slavery by Creon. And last, the established judicial system is also put into question by Demirel when it condemns Antigone, who is on the side of reason.

The reasons for her action, which gave Antigone a major centrality in the reception of the Theban myth, were at the core of an extensive discussion based not only on Sophocles' original but also on Hegel's reading. Thus, 20th-century philosophical thought continued to resort to the Antigone myth to express some of the principles that the war situation called into question. In France, Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), in *Glas* (1974), approaches the subject from a simultaneously structuralist and psychoanalytic perspective, reading the Greek original through the filter of the 19th and 20th century history of ideas. In Derrida's approach, the conflictive potential in the relationship between siblings is underlined from an erotic perspective: the closeness between Antigone and Polynices, and Eteocles's distance, which adds the power of sentimental affinity to the defence of a moral law.⁶⁸ The following comment on the French psychoanalyst Jacques-Marie Émile Lacan (1901–1981) and his *Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (1959), is quite adequate:⁶⁹ "Not only should Lacan's commentary of Antigone be seen as central to the elaboration of a specifically Lacanian discourse of psychoanalysis, it should also be considered an important moment in a wider French debate about the relationship between ethics and politics in the wake of World War II." Thus, Lacan is especially interested in the psychoanalytical and ethical reading of the myth. All his reflection is translated into a search for what he himself calls "pure desire", focusing exclusively on the character of Antigone, an Antigone without Creon, in her desire for death and in the beauty of her transgression. From Lacan's perspective, to understand Antigone is to free her from a dialectics with Creon, from the famous *agon* ("discussion") between two different orders of justice, supported by more or less valid arguments. What makes Antigone's burial of Polynices a psychic act is the fact that it includes the sister's 'desire' for death; and what makes it an ultimate act of ethics is exactly the fact that it possesses absolutely no moral logic. That being the case, Antigone's act can be called "pure desire". Because of its importance for future rewritings (by Zambrano and Eduarda Dionísio, for example),⁷⁰ it should be noted that "Antigone does not die just once; rather, she suffers a second, symbolic death

68 Steiner (1995) 206.

69 Leonard (2005) 107.

70 See below, 414–5, 430.

beyond the grave; she encounters death in life, which suspends the distinction between both.”⁷¹

As regards literature in a stricter sense, Antigone continued to exert her fascination in this century, too. In her text *Antigone ou le choix* (“Antigone, or the choice”) (1936),⁷² the French novelist and essayist Marguerite Yourcenar (1903–1987) associates Antigone with a Christian martyr, as Ballanche had done, comparable to St. Peter or Christ crucified (78, 79), as someone who possesses a light that can influence the universe in a favourable way, in contrast with the surrounding decadence (in Thebes, *les coeurs sont secs comme les champs* [“the hearts are dry like the fields”], 26); as an exception in that disturbed world, one could say that “le choix d’Antigone est la justice” (“Antigone’s choice is justice”, 26). On Oedipus’ daughter surrendering to death, Yourcenar (85) writes: “*Le temps reprend son cours au bruit de l’horloge de Dieu. Le pendule du monde est le cœur d’Antigone*” (“Time takes its course again under the noise of God’s clock. The pendulum of the world is the heart of Antigone.”) In this case, within a narrative that deals with a traditional subject, Antigone is a character marked by an extreme originality, following an interpretive approach that goes back to as early as the 16th century in France.

The French poet and philosopher Charles Maurras’ (1868–1952) reading of the myth in his poetry and prose opusculum called *Antigone vierge-mère de l’ordre* (“Antigone virgin-mother of order”) (1948) is quite interesting, since he addresses not only Antigone and the role described in his title, but also Creon. The tyrant’s intervention is possibly the book’s major novelty. Instead of the uncompromising guardian of law and order in the city as defined by Sophocles, when Maurras deals with the prohibition of Polynices’ burial as a break of the law, the king is presented as someone who not only opposes divine laws, but also those of the *polis* (“city”). The sense of tyranny is a result of exactly this arbitrariness, which entails his autocratic precedence over the laws of the city. Therefore, the ‘order’ represented by Antigone—which the very title invests with Catholic resonances—is not only the order of the gods, but also the order of the *polis* itself. If there is any degree of anarchy in the plot, it must be ascribed to Creon, as opposed to Antigone.

Years later, with the traumatic experience of World War II, Antigone became a paradigm of grief and resistance used in a wide variety of ways in what may be termed ‘Holocaust literature’. For example, in her poem *Kalavrita des mille Antigones* (“Kalavryta of the thousand Antigones”) (1979), Charlotte Delbo (1913–1985), a French writer and an active member of the resistance, uses the

71 Lehmann (2016) 94.

72 The text is cited from Yourcenar (1974).

Theban heroine to describe her own experience as a prisoner in Auschwitz as well to pay her tribute to the people of Kalavrita, who were massacred when the German occupied the Peloponnesian city in 1943. After visiting the place, Delbo retains the memory of the slaughtering of the entire male population and the burial carried out by the women survivors, who risked their own lives since they were not complying with the enemy's prohibition. The German author and playwright Rolf Hochluth's (born 1931) novel *Die Berliner Antigone* ("The Berlin Antigone") (1958) is also marked by the atrocities of war. Here, the author recasts Polynices as Anne's brother, who was involved in the 1944 conspiracy against Hitler and was therefore hanged and condemned to be dissected. His remains are taken and buried under an air raid, and his sister grieves over his disfigured body, feeling an instinctive revulsion at the inhumaneness of the situation. As a consequence of her act, Anne is now persecuted by the established power and sentenced to be beheaded and to experience the same fate as her brother. It may be argued that more than burying her brother at the cost of her own life, what Antigone does is to replace her brother's body with her own.⁷³ Playing the part of Haemon, the outraged fiancé whose bride is taken from him, is the son of the judge who condemns Anne for fear of Hitler's inevitable reaction should the young woman's transgression fail to be punished.

Under the influence of the innovations taking place in Europe, Spanish theatre, not only in the Spanish language but also in Catalanian and Galician, also entered a phase of scenic experimentation. In conjunction with the Spanish 20th century political developments, marked by the civil war (1936–1939) and by years of dictatorship, theatre found in the fratricide duel between the two Theban princes a natural symbol, and in Antigone the fittest model for a message of resistance, and also of reconciliation. These two concepts—resistance and reconciliation—were present⁷⁴ in some works, significantly concentrated

73 Steiner (1995) 175.

74 To these titles the following may be added: Guillem Colom, *Antígona* (1935); Joan Povill i Adserà, *La tragèdia d' Antígona* ("Antigone's tragedy"; 1961); Manuel Bayo, *Ahora en Tebas* ("Now in Thebes"; 1963); Josep Muñoz i Pujol, *Antígona 66* (1965); Joseph María Muñoz i Pujol, *Antígona* (1967); Carlos de la Rica, *La razón de Antígona* ("Antigone's reason"; [1968] 1980); José Martín Elizondo, *Antígona y los perros* ("Antigone and the dogs"; 1969), later (1980) titled *Antígona 80*, and (1988) *Antígona entre muros* ["Antigone between walls"]; Alfonso Jiménez Romero, *Oración de Antígona* ("Antigone's Prayer"; 1969); Xosé María Rodríguez, *Créon... Créon* (1975); Manuel Lourenço, *Tragicomedia do vento de Tebas namorado dunha forca* ("Tragicomedy of the Theban wind enamoured with a gallows"; 1977); Agustín García Calvo, *Ismena. Tragicomedia musical* ("Ismene. A music tragicomedy"; 1980); Luis de Ríaza, *Antígona...! Cerda!* ("Antigone...! Sow!"; 1983); Romà

in a short span of time: Salvador Espriu's *Antígona* (1939; unpublished until 1955, after several revisions, it had a second edition in 1969),⁷⁵ *Antígona: adaptación muy libre de la tragedia de Sófocles* ("Antigone: a very free adaptation of Sophocles' tragedy"), by José María Pemán (1945),⁷⁶ *La sangre de Antígona* ("Antigone's blood"), by José Bergamín (1954)⁷⁷ and María Zambrano's *La tumba de Antígona* ("Antigone's tomb", 1967).⁷⁸

Poet, novelist and playwright Salvador Espriu (1913–1985) writes his *Antígona* in the Catalan language, drawing parallels with the contemporary political crisis in its different phases.⁷⁹ In the first edition he specially enhances the overcoming of the fratricidal conflict, while in the second, where the outcome of the civil war was already known, he focuses on the tyrannical power that was established when the war ended. Therefore, the play fluctuates according to the development of events. His Creon is the incarnation of General Franco, whom the play holds responsible for the confrontation between Oedipus' two sons, to his own benefit. Antigone, a more politicized figure, intervenes in an unsuccessful attempt to suspend the conflict and mediate a reconciliation that may provide the defeated ones with an honorable way out of the situation. The suppression of Haemon allows the author to have Antigone's emotions focused on her brothers only, which constitutes the main topic at that moment. What she stands for is the principle of an equal right for both winners and defeated, all of them deserving of the same mourning. That is why, despite all the risks,

Comamala, *Antígona* (1986); María Xosé Queizán, *Antígona, a forza do sangue* ("Antigone, the power of blood"; 1989); Pere Alberò, *Antígona o la sement enterrada* ("Antigone, or the buried seed"; 1990). The different Spanish authors generally based their rewrites on a number of previous interpretations of Antigone, adapting them to a specific context: as a symbol of progressive ideals or of Catholic ideologies and conservative politics, of peace and reconciliation, of clandestinity and opposition to the regime, of reaction against capitalist models of collective life, or of generational or gender conflicts.

75 Morenilla (2015) 108, 111 stresses the successive changes introduced by Espriu, which, in some cases, did alter the general concept behind each version. This flexibility is a distinctive trait in the author's literary personality, which contributes to the correspondence between the myth and the actual flow of contemporary events.

76 Pemán (1946).

77 Bergamín (1983).

78 Trueba Mira (2012).

79 Espriu uses the *contaminatio* process by introducing elements from Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, and Euripides' *Phoenician Women* in the Sophoclean version. Some years later the same pattern was used in Portugal, by Júlio Dantas. There is, in fact, a coincidence as regards the names of the Councillors who are part of the chorus in the Portuguese text and in Espriu's second version—Énops, Ástaco, for example.

she buries Polynices, accompanied by an accomplice, her servant Eumolpus, who may be said to take on the role of Statius' Argia. In the second version of his play (1969), Espriu introduces a new character, Lúcido Conselheiro ("the Lucid Councillor"), who enhances, by contrast, the Franco-like elements in Creon, and demonstrates how useless Antigone's sacrifice for the good of the city has been; her death had not succeeded in conquering the tyrant's egoism.⁸⁰

José María Pemán (poet, novelist and playwright too; 1897–1981), in his turn, shares the same aim of exposing fascism as well as the desire for amnesty and reconciliation, which the Francoist era naturally suggested. About his *Antígona*, it has been underlined that it can be defined more as 'a translation / adaptation' of Sophocles than a true 're-creation'.⁸¹ However, "a Catholic symbolism with right-wing political connotations" has been identified in Pemán's text, which may in fact constitute its most distinctive mark.⁸² This Antigone's life is guided by love, which she feels for one of her brothers and for her fiancé; she is a kind of adolescent growing up guided by her sentiments—which, however, lead her to perdition—with the awareness that her exemplary action will turn her into 'a myth'. Her end is consummated not in the form of suicide, but as a death 'on the third day', in Haemon's loving arms.

José Bergamín (1897–1983), Spanish poet, essayist and playwright, has adapted the same myth, with a philosophic tone and in a poetic form,⁸³ in *La sangre de Antígona* ("Antigone's blood"; a play written during his exile in Paris, ca. 1954, first published in 1983).⁸⁴ The reference to blood in the title, when associated with the subtitle, *Misterio en tres actos* ("A mystery in three acts"), underscores the essential characteristic in the play: the sacred and

80 In 1981, Espriu rewrites the Antigone myth, this time as a short prose narrative, included in the collection *Les roques i el mar: el blau* ("The rocks and the sea: the blue"), which addresses other themes of Greek mythology; among that collection of 98 short narratives, one is titled *Antígona* and another one *Ismena*. The Antigone text is a monologue where the political tone is now replaced by the human approach, with the heroine herself providing the 'true' explanation for her action: she was not driven by the love she felt for her brother but rather by her extreme hatred of her uncle.

81 Villa (2009) 308.

82 Pianacci (2008) 62.

83 This creation, which combined speech and singing, was considered by Heras Toledo (2002) 145 a kind of opera libretto. It was a result of a meeting, in Paris, between Bergamín, Spanish musician Salvador Bacarisse, and film director Roberto Rossellini. It was never performed in its original version. Although the text was published in 1983, the music score remained unpublished.

84 Bergamín (1983).

symbolic character of the shedding of blood.⁸⁵ In this case, the fratricidal fight and the bloodshed it causes, a metaphor of the civil war, is more conspicuous than Antigone's rebelliousness. After her brothers' death, Antigone continues to be in contact with them in her dreams; this contact then becomes real (much like in María Zambrano),⁸⁶ and they demand that she lay down her life to purify their stained family. In a supreme gesture of reconciliation, the young woman exhumes Eteocles to bury him with Polynices, seeking to erase the black mark of fratricide. Blood is also the price Antigone will have to pay to redeem a kind of 'original sin' that affects the Theban royal house. And, lastly, it becomes the symbol of a life's dilemma, for Antigone is a woman who has a legitimate hope for a bright future: on the one hand, she is the image of vital drive and fertility, while, on the other, she is also the instrument whereby a crime is expiated. From this point of view, the death of Oedipus' daughter—that obviates those of Haemon and Eurydice which in Sophocles served as extra punishment for the tyrant—materializes a 'Christian passion', which is seen as both sacrifice and redemption.⁸⁷

In the same context, one of the most famous and influential versions of Antigone is the one written by Spanish philosopher and playwright María Zambrano (1904–1991), *La tumba de Antígona* ("Antigone's tomb", published in Mexico in 1967), a reflection that is marked by the author's own life experience. Persecuted by the fascist dictatorship established in Spain in the aftermath of the civil war (1936–1939), Zambrano was forced to exile, first in Europe (France and Italy) and then in Latin America. Antigone is extensively present in all of Zambrano's career as a writer, which culminates in the above-mentioned drama.⁸⁸ Before that, she had approached the theme in a number of different pieces.⁸⁹ To some extent, for Zambrano Antigone is a symbol for her own life,

85 As Vela Tejada (2009) 267 summarises: "Compared to the Sophocles' version, which could be defined as 'political' given its proximity to the spirit of the 5th century BC Greek polis, this is an 'intimate' drama which highlights the more religious aspects of the classical theme projected into Bergamín's own religiosity."

86 See below, in this same page.

87 Pianacci (2008) 71 stresses Antigone's image before her death; she had been given not bread and water but bread and wine—which "ritualises the mystery of the Eucharist with the ritual manipulation of bread and wine."

88 Before this, Zambrano had dedicated three other important reflections to this theme: *Delírio de Antígona e Cuaderno de Antígona* ("Antigone's delirium", and "Antigone's notebook", 1948), *Antígona o de la guerra civil* ("Antigone, or on the civil war", 1958), outros *Cuadernos de Antígona* ("Antigone's notebooks", 1962), and *El personaje autor: Antígona* ("The author-character: Antigone", 1965).

89 All these pieces are now compiled in Trueba Mira's edition (2012).

for author and character are both condemned 'to exile' as a result of a conflict between brothers. Besides the innovative—philosophical and ideological—approach to the old myth, it is important to acknowledge the huge influence of María Zambrano's text on other rewritings, including the Iberoamerican ones, where Antigone's dialogue with death is at the centre of the action and, given the silence of her interlocutors, monologue becomes the privileged form.⁹⁰ As if suspended between life and death, Antigone is imprisoned inside a cave that is meant to be her tomb and that leaves her alone and more lucid, and she has a voice with which to meditate on her life path and establish a connection⁹¹ with all of those who had been her central partners in life: her sister, her parents, her brothers, her Nurse, Haemon, and Creon (besides the forces that moulded her fate, the Night and the Harpy). This experience includes 'time'—an ample time that allows her to 'live' her own 'death'—and the sound of a 'voice' that enable her/us to understand the purpose and the meaning of her sacrifice.

Towards the end of the 20th century, Belgian novelist and psychoanalyst Henry Bauchau (1913–2012) expresses his enthusiasm for Antigone in three different productions, i.e., the poem *Les deux Antigones* ("The two Antigones") (1982) and the novels *Oedipe sur la route* ("Oedipus on his way") (1990) and *Antigone* (1997).⁹² They all represent a new literary model that 'refreshes' this

90 See, e.g., the cases of Argentine writer Griselda Gambaro or the Portuguese author Eduarda Dionísio. Pociña (in press) adds other rewritings where he identifies the presence of Zambrano's influence: *La pasión según Antígona Pérez* ("The passion according to Antígona Pérez"), by Puerto-Rican author Luis Rafael Sánchez (1968), which features an Antigone who is imprisoned in the dungeons of President Creón Molina—where she is tortured and required to confess that she had buried her two revolutionary brothers—is visited by her mother, the dictator, and a priest; or *Antígona entre muros* ("Antigone between walls"), by Spanish writer José Martín Elizondo (1988, staged in 1969 under a different title, *Antígona y los perros* ["Antigone and the dogs"]), which features the experience of its heroine as an inmate in a Greek prison for women, where a performance of *Antigone* is being rehearsed. In 21st century Mexico (2000), Ricardo Andrade Jardí's *Los motivos de Antígona* ("Antigone's reasons") presents Antigone again incarcerated in a cave-tomb, and gives her a monologue where she can reflect on the topics that obsess her, such as subjection, law, duty, in an attempt to explain her act (see Pianacci (2008) 132–4).

91 This contact, a consequence of her delirium, is expressed under the form of a monologue (with Antigone herself), a pseudo-dialogue (with *La Noche* ["The Night"], *Sueño de la hermana* ["The sister's dream"], *La sombra de la madre* ["The mother's shadow"]) or a dialogue (with *Edipo* ["Oedipus"], *Ana la Nodriz* ["Ana the Nurse"], *La harpía* ["The harpy"], *Los hermanos* ["The brothers"], *Llega Hemón* ["Haemon arrives"], *Creón* ["Creon"], *Los desconocidos* ["The strangers"]).

92 Bauchau (1999).

century's huge dramatic tradition dedicated to the Theban myth. This time the saga of the Theban royal family, complete with new characters that give it more expanded dynamics, is narrated in the first person, which focuses on Antigone's exile after the death of her father, her return to Thebes, and the civic intervention-action she carries out in a community impoverished by the war. In a second phase, Bauchau's poem concentrates on Antigone's attempt to pacify her brothers and the sacrifice of her own life for the sake of family values. The new specificity here is the focus on the human side of the old myth: characters such as Jocasta, the image of the mother who had an affective preference for Polynices and who had triggered the conflict between her two sons ever since they were children, is now in a central position as concerns family disputes; Eteocles and Polynices explain the different reasons for their mutual hostility; the usual contrasts between the two sisters, Antigone and Ismene, are now replaced by a bond of solidarity, which some 20th century versions, notably María Zambrano's, seem to prefer; and, especially, Antigone develops a softer attitude with respect to her love for life. Indeed she would like to be able to live if given the opportunity; however, she consents to her own, less heroic but perhaps more humanized, annihilation for another kind of love, the love for her own kindred.⁹³

Also in Portuguese literature, especially during the dictatorship that lasted for almost five decades in the 20th century,⁹⁴ Antigone is used as an example of different voices of the resistance. In one of her poems, Portuguese poet Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen (1919–2004) chooses to develop a parallel between Oedipus' daughter and Catarina Eufémia,⁹⁵ a country woman who is a fierce defender of the rights of the humblest sectors of the population against the

93 Curiously, this novel was adapted to a drama format on different occasions; see Pibarot (2009) 105. It has inspired, for instance, *Le Cri d'Antigone* ("Antigone's Cry"), an adaptation by Géraldine Bénichou for a performance with an actress and a singer (2010); see www.lestroiscoups.com (27.10.2010). The very polyphonic nature of the text, which combines diction and song, expresses Antigone's 'cry' and provides an emotional support to the performance.

94 After many years of tremendous political and social instability, Portugal experienced, between 1926–1974, the authoritarian rule of António de Oliveira Salazar.

95 In this historical context, Catarina Eufémia (1928–1954), a field worker from the Alentejo, a humble, anonymous woman, a reaper who worked in large estates for a meagre salary, experienced the social unrest that agitated the southern region of Portugal. During one of the strikes for better wages, in 1954, Catarina, who was pregnant, was mortally wounded by the police shotguns. She became the symbol of a woman and a mother who resisted and opposed Salazar's dictatorial regime.

repression of the dictatorial system.⁹⁶ Andresen opens the poem, titled *Catarina Eufémia*, with a reference to justice as *o primeiro tema da reflexão grega* ("the major topic in Greek thought"), to then pay her tribute to the heroine from the Alentejo, exposed in her female condition of pregnancy, which did not hinder her from confronting the strength of the dictator and be killed. The hymn ends with the following words:

Porque eras a mulher e não somente a fêmea
 Eras a inocência frontal que não recua
 Antígona poisou a sua mão sobre o teu ombro no instante em que
 morreste
 E a busca da justiça continua

Because you were the woman and not just the female
 You were the frontal innocence that does not retreat
 Antigone rested her hand on your shoulder at the moment of your death
 And the quest for justice goes on.

The South-American world expressed a similar degree of interest in Antigone's myth, with the production of other genres besides drama.⁹⁷ The 1955 novel *La hojarasca* ("The foliage"), by Colombian Nobel prize Gabriel García Márquez, based on Sophocles' text, which he manipulates,⁹⁸ can be mentioned as an

96 Sophia de Mello (21996) 164. Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen is one of the major Portuguese poets of the 20th century. Her work includes a variety of titles that illustrate her special preference for Greco-Roman tradition, published in poetry collections such as: *Dual* ("Dual") (1972), *O nome das coisas* ("The name of things") (1977), *O Búzio de Cós* ("The dog whelk shell of Cos") (1997), *Orpheu e Eurydice* ("Orpheus and Euridice") (2001).

97 Some versions of the theme in different genres are worth mentioning: for example, *Antigone*, a short-story by Colombian writer Luis Andrés Caicedo (1970), where Polynices is buried in a cannibalistic context; or the collection of poems *Fábulas de la garza dessan-grada* ("Fables of the bled heron"), by Rosario Ferré (1982), a Puerto-Rican woman writer, with a number of poems that compose the portrait of a protesting Antigone; or *Divina anarquía* ("Divine anarchy"), by Argentinian novelist Belén Gache (2001), where, like the author's own mother country, Antigone marches adrift after her break with the past.

98 García Márquez (1974). On the meaning of the title—*La hojarasca* ("The foliage")—, an allusion to the pollution caused by the unburied body, the author explains (7): "It was a dishevelled, flurried foliage, formed by human and material waste from other places; remains of a civil war . . . Everything was contaminated by its multitudinous, boisterous odour, an odour of an under-the-skin secretion and of distant death. (. .) Its medley load of waste materials was being scattered all over the streets."

example. The role of Polynices is played by the Doctor, a character hated by the people because he had refused to treat some wounded people and to whom, as a vengeance, the community refuses to give burial. This collective decision is seconded by the *Alcalde* ("the Mayor") and Padre Ángel, the priest, and represents a consensus between the political, the religious and the popular authorities. On the opposite side are the *Coronel* ("the Colonel") and his daughter Isabel, the former taking on the role of Antigone and the young woman, a more timorous character, that of Ismene. Mercifully, the Colonel is able to obtain a permission to give the Doctor a secret burial. It is also important to point out the contrast with the figure of *El Cachorro* ("The Dog")/ Eteocles, another priest who had died years before, and whom the people honored with a magnificent funeral, in gratitude for his relevant services to the community. Between him and the Doctor, who had both arrived in the city on the same day, although they received a very differently welcome, the physical similarities are obvious . . . The legend of Thebes is thus repeated in the mythic territory of Macondo.

It must however be recognized that also in South America drama was a privileged form to rewrite the classical episode of Antigone. In consonance with the events taking place in the western European world, especially during the second half of the 20th century, also Latin America—which was in fact a refuge for many European intellectual expats—found a model in Antigone through which to express their own traumas and crises.⁹⁹ The abundance of rewritings inspired by this theme is so vast that it would be absolutely impossible to mention them all.¹⁰⁰ However, we will consider some of the most expressive

99 Pianacci (2008) 75 synthesizes them as follows: "nationalisms and pro-independence or revolutionary movements, the persistence of dictatorships with different ideological profiles, the great marginalised majorities, direct or indirect intervention from the USA, the development of political awareness on the part of the proletariat masses, and the impact of changes in models of power at world level."

100 According to Pianacci (2008), 30 from a total of 76 are Latin-American *Antigones*. The following, from other Latin-America countries, can be added to the Argentine *Antigones*: *Antígona en el infierno* ("Antigone in hell"), by Rolando Steiner (Nicaragua, 1958); *Antígona*, by Sarina Helfgott (Peru, 1964); *La fiesta de los moribundos* ("The party of the dying"), by César Rengifo (Venezuela, 1966); *La pasión según Antígona Pérez* ("The passion according to Antígona Pérez"), by Luis Rafael Sánchez (Puerto Rico, 1968); *Antígona-Humor* ("Antigone-Humor"), by Franklin Domínguez (Dominican Republic, 1968); *Detrás queda el polvo* ("The dust remains behind"), by José Triana (Cuba, 1968); *Antígona*, by José Gabriel Nuñez (Venezuela, 1978); *Antígona*, by José Watanabe (Peru, 2001); *Antígona y actriz* ("Antigone and actress"), by Carlos Satizábal (Colombia, 2008).

versions, which not only recuperate Sophocles' original but are also the result of a wide intertextual web.

In Argentine literature, the most famous drama versions of this myth produced in the 20th century are:¹⁰¹ *Antígona Vélez*, by Leopoldo Marechal (1951), *El Límite* ("The Limit"), by Alberto de Zavalía (1958), *La cabeza en la jaula* ("The head inside the cage"), by David Cureses (1963), *Golpes a mi puerta* ("Knocks on my door"), by Juan Carlos Gené (1988), and Griselda Gambaro's *La Antígona Furiosa* ("Furious Antigone") (1989).¹⁰²

Antígona Vélez, authored by Leopoldo Marechal (novelist and playwright, 1900–1970), a committed Peronist, was subject to different interpretations within the context it was written for;¹⁰³ in some cases, given the author's political alignment, the play was taken as pro-Peronist propaganda, "a solution for dichotomies such as civilization / barbarism and individual / collective". According to this interpretation, *Antígona Vélez* would be the convenient text within Juan Perón's first government (1946–1955), consonant as it was with Peronist ideology.¹⁰⁴ For other commentators, irrespective of the prevailing ideology, Marechal's play was nonetheless universal in scope. An intermediate view would probably be better fit to ascertain the meaning of a play which, despite dealing with universal issues, as it does, certainly bears the marks of the context in which it was produced.

The place and time of Marechal's *Antígona Vélez* situate the Greek heroine in 19th century Argentina, locating her in the inland plains, at the colonial 'La Postrera' hacienda;¹⁰⁵ "es el desierto, la pampa, la que ocupa el lugar trágico del hado en los griegos" ("it is the desert, the pampa, that occupies the tragic place of the Greeks' fate.")¹⁰⁶ This context suggests another reading of the conflict between 'human law'—here represented by the "ley de la llanura" ("the law of the plains")—and 'divine law'—"la ley de Dios" ("God's law"). This is the time when, in the name of the country's development and modernization, the Argentine government decides to carry out a military assault on the Indian populations of the inland, a violent, threatening South. The assault led to a genocide supposedly justified by pacification and the need for the

101 Biglieri (2016), in press, mentions "at least" eight. Juan Cruz Varela's *Argia* (1824) and Roberto Jorge Payro's *Antígona* (1885) should also be added.

102 The play had been first performed, in a more restricted context, in 1986, at Goethe Institute in Buenos Aires. A commentary on this *Antigone* is available below, 458–9.

103 Biglieri (2009) 112–3.

104 Marechal (2012).

105 Symbolically, this name situates it at the farthest southern border.

106 Martínez Cuitiño (1982) 37–48, especially 39–40.

development of agriculture and cattle-raising in those extensive plains. What we might see here is a territory divided into two antagonistic factions where civilization endeavours to eradicate barbarism. Another, religious conflict, was added to this cultural and economic ideology, with civilisation bearing the Christian mark and barbarism the Indian. In actual fact, *Antígona Vélez*, written in the 20th century in an Argentina where those ideals of 'progress' were established, certainly deals with the conflicts that marked the country's history. Besides her uncle's prohibition, it is also the typically southern fury that Antigone faces when she dares to bury her brother, alone and in the dark. Ignacio, a traitor, had abandoned his world of Christians to join the heathen Indians, who attacked and pillaged the estates to ensure their own survival. On their side, Ignacio was a threat against the safety of his own people, in the opposite trench to that of his brother Martín / Eteocles, both fallen in the fight, though not at each other's hands. For that reason, their uncle, Don Facundo Galván / Creon, ascribes Ignacio the status of 'other', the exile, with whom dialogue is interdicted and who is condemned to have no burial. It is now time for a new Antigone, with the surname of *Vélez*, to proclaim herself the champion of a higher, eternal, and universal law, despite the fact that she supports the pampa pacification cause (which Facundo endorses): God commands that the dead must be buried. Antigone finally dies at the hands of the Indians—rather than in the traditional cave—when exposed to the enemy's arrows, together with Lisandro Galván / Hémon, the lover who follows her to share her sacrifice. They both thus become heroes in their struggle to conquer and defend the land and they earn the right to be buried together, which Don Facundo grants them as a homage to their love. The State's interests win, prevailing over individual values, irrespective of how legitimate these may be.¹⁰⁷

In *El Límite* (1958),¹⁰⁸ Alberto de Zavalía (1911–1988) continues to articulate a faithful rewriting of the Greek original with the marks of his coeval reality in Argentina. The background is, again, that of the civil war, which went hand in hand with the process of creating a model-government for the country, in the second half of the 19th century, opposing Unitarian partisans and Federalists.¹⁰⁹

107 Marechal's play was later adapted to an opera by Juan Carlos Zorzi, in 1991 (Mee/Foley (2011) 76).

108 Zavalía (1971).

109 The events Zavalía has in mind represent a violent confrontation between leaders and political positions competing for the nation's government—a true fratricidal fight—subsequent to the Christians' victory over the Indians in Marechal (1841): the battle fought between Unitarian troops led by Juan Lavalle, an ally of Marco Avellaneda, the governor of the Tucumán province, against the Federalist forces of General Manuel Oribe, whose

Zavalía's play develops around the legendary figure of Fortunata García, for whom the Unitarians represent civilization and freedom, while the Federalists are associated with barbarism and tyranny. The drama, in two acts, is set in the city of Tucumán, at D. Fortunata's town, the opponent of General Oribe. Just like in Sophocles' *Antigone*, both characters, as Zavalía explains in the preface,¹¹⁰ *llegan, cada cual, a su límite. De ahí la tragedia. De ahí el título de la tragedia* ("reach, each of them, their limits. Hence the tragedy. Hence the tragedy's title.") Although the story conflates with Argentine history, it is quite similar to Sophocles'. Oribe plays the part of the tyrant, perhaps even more resolutely than Creon; his scepticism with regard to freedom is quite flagrant, especially as the action takes place in Latin America, whose history has been so strongly marked by dictatorships; also the mutilation of Avellaneda's body gives a more violent nuance to the traditional disrespect for Polynice's corpse. On the other hand, the disobedience personified by Fortunata has a markedly political nature this time; what she defends is not blood ties, but rather her relationship with a fellow fighter, a brother of hers only in the sense that they both share the same Unitarian ideology. And last, as in Sophocles, the basic opposition is made more complex through the reactions of a number of secondary figures, adapted to this other reality. In a sequence that is suggestive of its Greek counterpart, Laura, who is Fortunata's cousin and embodies Ismene's fear, adheres to, or condones, the tyrant; her husband Felipe does the same, emphasizing his subservience as an acritical collaborator; Padre López, the priest, represents the religious power which, in dictatorial times, interestedly stood beside the tyrant; and Zenón, the servant, who aspires to be granted the gift of freedom by the established power. On the side of Fortunata and her rebelliousness is another non-conformist woman, Mercedes, a lonely person for the reason that her husband is away exiled in the Bolivian mountains, and Zoila, Zenón's mother, the old servant who plays the part of Antigone's Nurse—frequently present in modern versions—and who is steady in her loyalty to her lady's decisions. However, these Antigone-supporting characters are not exclusively women; Coronel Carballo is also part of the group, taking up the role of Haemon insofar as while he owes military obedience to Oribe, his beliefs and passions are dedicated to Fortunata, whom he is ready to support in the tribute to the head of Avellaneda. Therefore, the

commander-in-chief was Juan Manuel de Rosas. The final part of this war was marked by a particularly bloody episode: Avellaneda was made a prisoner and beheaded by the enemy, and his head, impaled on a spear, was exhibited in the city's main square, with a prohibition against any funeral honors.

traditional loneliness of the Sophoclean hero is absent in these counterpart characters.

Fortunata's disobedience does not take the form of a silent, hidden act, as it did in Sophocles; she puts together a well-wrought, cunning plan to convince the tyrant to grant a pardon to her husband, Domingo García, exiled in Bolivia for political reasons, in exchange for the promise of renouncing her rebelliousness. It is during the festivities held to celebrate the tyrant's appointment as 'the officer in command' of a fortified place that Fortunata finds an opportunity to bury Avellaneda's head, counting on a number of accomplices who either participate in the ritual or distract Oribe's attention while the act takes place. The tyrant responds to her cunning with more cunning, and, in order to hide his political failure, he announces that he had allowed the burial. Freedom nonetheless emerged victorious through the head that was finally buried so it can symbolically grow the roots of a promising future. We do not get to know if Fortunata, who is sentenced to death by firing squad because she refuses to collude with Oribe's lie, really meets her death. The important thing here is her act of rebelliousness and the promise of liberation that she represents.

Written by David Cureses (born 1935), *La cabeza en la jaula* ("The head inside the cage", 1963, published in 1987) places the action outside Argentina, in Colombia. It has been described as a "historical play"¹¹¹ because of its relationship with the death of the Colombian Policarpa Salavarrieta during the confrontation between Spanish colonialist troops and Colombian pro-independent forces (1811–1820). In this rewrite, the Labdacians are the Galán family, represented by their women after the systematic loss of their male members. They are still waiting for news concerning the fate of José Antonio Galán / Polynices, committed to the fight for emancipation against the troops of General Morillo, who had been sent by the Spanish king to control the insurrection. With the news of his death comes the order, issued by the Spanish senior military, that his head be publicly exhibited in a cage, and his body quartered and dragged through the city of Guaduas (a representation of events that actually took place in 1781). Policarpa Galán / Antigone, a cousin of the independence fighter, then decides to collect his remains and bury them, with the collaboration of other women of the house who divert the attention of the Spanish authorities. Despite the fact that Tenente Pablo Morillo / Hémon, the general's son, attempts to persuade Policarpa to flee from his father's persecution, the young woman chooses to remain faithful to her cause and stay. The women were found out and their treason punished with death; they were all

111 Pianacci (2008) 93.

shot right in front of their house, in a demonstration of the colonialists' hatred towards the creole population.

Playwright and actor Juan Carlos Gené's (1929–2012) *Golpes a mi puerta* ("Knocks at my door", 1988) is set in two non-identified Latin-American territories engaged in a political conflict and seeking the supremacy of a certain power in the place where the story takes place. Ana /Antigone and Úrsula /Ismene are nuns—sisters by religious choice—and their mission is to assist the poor and the helpless. Ana is requested to hide Pablo / Polynices, who is fleeing from the army who are chasing him. The mission's facilities are searched; with feigned kindness, because he is interested in being on good terms with the Church, Cerone / Creon, the 'alcalde' ("Mayor"), suspends the search, giving the two nuns the opportunity of protecting Pablo. In reality, however, his seizure and execution are only being postponed. Ana is arrested and the tyrant advises her to say that she had provided Pablo with shelter only because he had threatened her. The Bishop / Tiresias' request that they comply with Cerone's suggestion to protect their mission is met with two different responses: Úrsula does accept it, while Ana, who absolutely refuses to comply, is executed. In this adaptation, Gené is mostly interested in the power game designed to protect the interests of both the State and the Church, a much repeated motif in the Iberian-American context.

Portugal and Brazil did not fail to share the international interest in Antigone, which was inevitably influenced by the different political and cultural values and experiences on both sides of the Atlantic. Internal instability—notably, the long rule of fascist regimes and the gradual changes concerning women's social roles in the democratic societies that emerged after the collapse of those dictatorships—induced the production of new *Antigones*, this time in the Portuguese language. A very significant number of recreations of the Sophoclean original were produced on the Portuguese and Brazilian stage, which, although subject to the influence of intermediate productions, especially Cocteau, Anouilh, and Zambrano's, were inevitably characterized by the specificity and the sensitivity of their immediate context. The opportunity provided by the crisis for many Portuguese intellectuals in exile to develop international contacts definitely contributed towards consolidating assonances between Portuguese reality and the experience of other western countries, and helped writers become attuned to the most successful Antigone rewriting in Europe.

In a dramatic tradition not particularly marked by classical influences as the Portuguese one, it is quite interesting for a theme to impose itself by reappearing in successive rewritings within a relatively short period of time. This was certainly the case with Sophocles' *Antigone* in 20th century Portugal.

Indeed, a significant number of politically charged *Antigones* did emerge in the Portuguese theatrical landscape in mid-20th century, coinciding with the long years of dictatorship. They include such creations as António Sérgio's, a philosopher and an essayist who had left the country for political reasons and who produced a number of different versions of the myth (1930,¹¹² ca. 1950, 1958); by Júlio Dantas, a politician and a playwright (1946);¹¹³ by António Pedro (1953)¹¹⁴ and João de Castro Osório (1954),¹¹⁵ both with a long theatrical experience; and by Mário Sacramento (1958), a doctor by profession.¹¹⁶ Their works can be divided roughly into two groups: those of a more essayistic nature and a clear objective of political resistance, and those designed to be performed. The plays that brought Antigone to the Portuguese stages during the 48 year-long dictatorship (1926–1974) are mostly political, being quite close to the Greek original in their design. The personality of each author, as well as the specific moment where the plays were written have nonetheless been determining factors as concerns the successive innovations they introduce. In their reflections, Castro Osório and Sacramento went beyond the strictly Portuguese context to approach, from a more general perspective, European dictatorships and the response of the oppressed peoples as World War II unfolded. Osório is the exception insofar as he was a supporter of the Iberian authoritarian regimes. In the last decade of the 20th century, the theme appealed also to two female authors, Hélia Correia (1991),¹¹⁷ a novelist and a short story writer, and Eduarda Dionísio (1992),¹¹⁸ a writer and woman of the theatre. This time the perspective is focused on Antigone the woman, whose major opponent is both her own self and her female condition as stipulated by society. In Brazilian theatre, however, this motif is principally developed in playwright Jorge Andrade's (1922–1984) versions (1958, 1969).

António Sérgio's (1883–1969) rewrite (1930), which was never performed on stage, functioned as a social study or essay, which can only approximate drama in its dialogue format. Its objective was mainly didactic and it aimed to inspire a democratic voice of resistance against the dictatorship. Here the chorus is a particularly noteworthy element; it was divided into two antagonistic groups:

¹¹² Sérgio (1930).

¹¹³ Dantas (1946).

¹¹⁴ Pedro (1981).

¹¹⁵ Osório (1954).

¹¹⁶ Sacramento (1958). The text would be included in the *Teatro Anatómico* ("Anatomical Theatre") tetralogy in the following year.

¹¹⁷ Correia (2006).

¹¹⁸ Dionísio (1992).

those gravitating around the sphere of power, like officers, military, spies, and other supporters of the dictatorship; and the anonymous masses—where an old beggar and some shepherds who represent the peace and tranquillity of rural life stand out—who suffer the consequences of central authoritarianism, and embody the play's tensions as well as those of their coeval Portuguese society. As regards Creon, there is a curious innovation: he orders Haemon to conduct a survey through which he hopes to assess the weight of his democratic opposition. By decision of the king, the prisoner's fate will depend on the success of this procedure: if the authoritarian regime prevails, Oedipus' daughter will be irrevocably sentenced to death; if democracy wins, then Antigone may be used as a hostage during the negotiations for the transition. The traditional tyrant is now adapted to a new context, to which the play directly and repeatedly alludes. Antigone's suicide causes Haemon to take his own life too, and, as it happens in Sophocles, democracy emerges victorious albeit with a bitter taste, since it was conquered in exchange for the life of two people: this is the legacy that Haemon and his lover bequeath to a Thebes that has now been freed from tyranny. The fact that Sérgio was accused of plagiarising Cocteau¹¹⁹ is a clear indication that the French author did have a major influence on the Portuguese intellectual, who was exiled in France.

Later, António Sérgio would reformulate his text, adjusting it to new political contexts; in 1950, he produced a parody, which has never been published, focused on Salazar's dictatorship and his *delirantemente anacrónica*¹²⁰ ("deliriously anachronistic") rhetoric. The reference to the covert links and collusions between the Church and the State, as well as to a network of organizations created to support the dominant ideology and enhance the figure of the leader, is presented in a caricatural tone. Years later, in 1958, the topic is adapted to a specific situation of electoral fraud, when a candidate of the regime, Américo Thomaz, supposedly defeats the famous candidate of the opposition, Humberto Delgado, known as 'o general sem medo'¹²¹ ("the fearless General"). Nevertheless, this episode did strike a severe blow on the Portuguese authoritarian regime. The repeated presence of the 'Antigone' theme in António

119 Mendonça (1931).

120 Sérgio (1950). Manuscrito: 4–5. In general, this second version was very similar to the previous one.

121 The two candidates ran against each other in the 1958 elections, which, because the process was conducted in a fraudulent manner, led to the victory of the candidate of the regime, in spite of the people's open support of Humberto Delgado. Even if the outcome of this electoral campaign was a defeat, it had nonetheless the merit of raising peoples' awareness and of being a true confrontation against the established dictatorial regime.

Sérgio as an expression of his political thought shows how the myth is capable of undergoing interesting variations in its meaning, in consonance with the immediate, day-to-day political life.

Unexpectedly, since he was a conservative and a man of the system, Júlio Dantas (1876–1962), a noted psychiatrist, politician, intellectual and playwright, recreated a version of *Antigone* where the rhetoric of protest against *a ditadura dos fortes*¹²² (“the dictatorship of the powerful”) is apparent. Oedipus’ daughter is not alone in her protest against the tyrant; there is ample solidarity in her dissent, starting with the senators in the chorus—divided between a sense of individuality and a sense of collectiveness. Other different options are added to this innovative topic: a plain, concise diction and obvious touches of Neo-romanticism delineate an Antigone who is a martyr of honor and affection. A farewell scene between Antigone and her betrothed is a new element added to Sophocles’ original, stressing the romantic component within a different aesthetics. The author’s good knowledge of European cultural productions explains the variety of nuances he added to the Sophoclean model: the ‘Antigone-as-martyr’ tradition,¹²³ coinciding with the prevailing frame of mind at the end of World War II, when the play was written (1946), besides also some elements from Anouilh, whose *Antigone* was enjoying great success at the time.

An *Antigone* written by António Pedro (1909–1966), a plastic artist, playwright and stage director, with ample international experience, produced for Teatro Experimental do Porto (“The Experimental Theatre of Oporto”)—a company he directed between 1953 and 1962—was undoubtedly the one recreation to achieve the most popularity on Portuguese stages. Pedro does not hesitate to call it *a tragédia da liberdade*¹²⁴ (“the tragedy of freedom”), which shows that it also had a political aim. However, there was also ‘freedom’ in the way the author uses certain aesthetic and literary models, the intention being to make it more palatable to the European taste of his day, especially considering the influence of French writers like Cocteau and Anouilh, or the Italian Pirandello. Pedro’s ultimate goals were to professionalize the company and to advance the necessary reform of Portuguese theatre. Besides its political

122 Dantas (1946) 19. Although *Antigone* serves as its basic model, this play is a *contaminatio*, incorporating material from other plays of the Theban cycle, Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, as well as *Seven against Thebes* by Aeschylus and *Phoenician Women* by Euripides. Dantas explores conventional resources of Greek tragic drama, such as dramatic silence and voluntary sacrifice.

123 See above, 405–6.

124 Pedro (1981) 261.

meaning, this reformer of Portuguese theatre used Antigone as a sufficiently flexible paradigm to allow the confrontation with different drama models and test their adaptability. His concern to bring the myth to new audiences is expressed in the prologue as well as in a parabasis-type intervention. The voices of the Chorus and the Stage Director,¹²⁵ himself a character, are used to reflect on the nature and objectives of drama and on the general outlines of the myth. They underline the role, both conventional and innovative, ascribed to each of the characters, and the possible articulation of different theatrical genres, like Greek tragedy and bourgeois drama. The original figure of Artemisia is the key to achieve the intended effect; she is the maid, who functions as a kind of supplement to the chorus in commenting the events, and, on the other hand, she is Antigone's rival as regards the love for Haemon.

João de Castro Osório (1899–1970), a politician, an essayist, a journalist and a playwright, included an Antigone as the third play in his *Trilogia de Édipo* ("Oedipus Trilogy"). In this production, the tragic is combined with some marks of Christian morals, following a line of interpretation rooted in European tradition,¹²⁶ albeit unique in Portuguese versions. With its controversy, this version seeks to find a new Humanism within a process in which Antigone makes herself heard as the spokesperson for a redemptive dream, marked by clemency and forgiveness, which can restore peace and hope to Thebes. Differently from all other Portuguese versions of the time, Osório's *Antigone* praises the 'Estado Novo' ("New State")'s project embodied in Salazar, in line with the author's political status as a radical nationalist. In his *Trilogia* ("Trilogy"), the emergence of Oedipus is seen as the arrival of a superman and the beginning of a *new era* for the city. In all the three plays, conflicting forces are embodied by the priests of the heavenly gods in contradistinction to those who worship terrible gods; the sieged people in contradistinction to the attackers; or even Oleno, the prophet of the gods and the Sphynx, in opposition to Tiresias, who represents Oedipus' dream and the destruction of all evil forces. This play is thus built on the basis of a series of confrontations of opposite entities. Within this structure, Eteocles' rule at the beginning of the play corresponds to the dominion of the terrible divinities over the city. Polynices, Theseus' ally, embodies the defence of Oedipus' principles as a clairvoyant.

125 The pair Stage Director/Electrician, engaged in a dialogue in A. Pedro's prologue, is inspired by Luigi Pirandello's *Six characters in search of an author* (1921), first performed in Portugal in 1923. Including these technicians in the performance makes the prologue a metatheatrical element, where the conventions of western drama and the reception of Greek tragedy are discussed.

126 See, above, Garnier, Rotrou, Ballanche.

With the death of both her brothers, Antigone confronts Creon, giving herself up in sacrifice in the name of her father's project for Thebes. It is in her hands, as well as in Haemon's, that Laius' son, *ex machina*, places his hopes for the continuity of his project. As has been pointed out:¹²⁷ "This is Castro Osório's main dramatic topic, a strong and authoritarian political leader is needed: first Oedipus and then the heir of his power, Antigone, will compensate people's lack of self-determination." This means that the hope of salvation for both Thebes and the world lies in Antigone, as a reflection of Oedipus, the true hero of Osório's play.

In his *Antígona*,¹²⁸ doctor, essayist and writer Mário Sacramento (1929–1969) takes us back to the political dissention pattern, although the expression of this dissention is quite unique when compared to his coeval *Antígonas*. The action is set in the living room of a private house, in France, during the Second World War. This choice is meant to extend the political issues to a European scenario. At first sight, the characters—Michel / Louis (the guest, a former member of the French resistance, now terminally ill), Yvonne (a Professor of Literature) and the blind man (Yvonne's father)—are totally alien to the Greek original, though they will be experiencing a truly 'tragic' situation: as survivors of a devastating war and in their identifying traits, the three characters, who are confined in a room, are the image of what is left of the Labdacian family. Yvonne incarnates the daughter and sister in a family destroyed by war and without a future; her sense of *philia* ("friendship, relationship") impels her to be 'a acompanhante do pai cego' ("the companion of her blind father"), a duplication of Antigone in *Oedipus at Colonus*, as well as the sister who is committed to bury the body of her brother who has been declared dead in combat; Michel / Louis is the unknown guest, a terminal patient, who has an intuitive relationship of complicity with Yvonne. This is later explained, through an *anagnorisis* ("recognizing process"), by the fact that they are after all relatives, since he is the brother / Polynices who had been away at war and was believed to be dead. Within the stifling space inside four walls, their conversation focuses on the big questions of 'identity', 'affection', and 'freedom', controversial concepts in

127 Rodrigues (in press).

128 This play was initially published on its own (1958) and later included in a tetralogy titled *Teatro Anatômico* ("Anatomical Theatre", 1959). 'Anatomia' ("anatomy") here suggests an analysis of different forms of the cultural and social experience of humanity, and 'teatro' ("theatre") connotes also the place where the dismembering of the human being happens. The four plays are completely autonomous, and *Antígona* is defined as an 'ensaio dramático' ("dramatic essay"); although the text is in dialogue form, this description indicates that it is basically a political-philosophical essay.

the characters' life experience. In this context, *Antígona* is a metatheatrical play, under the form of an annotated volume that draws the characters' attention, materializing the issues under discussion and promoting recognition: after all, the book that belonged to the family's library was the material that had served as the basis for the dissertation that Louis was trying to write before the war would take him away.

In Portugal in the 1990s, when the reaction against a dictatorship (overthrown in 1974) no longer made sense, Hélia Correia (born 1949) and Eduarda Dionísio's (born 1946) *Antígonas* focused rather on women's issues. They simultaneously went back to a theme which Sophocles had also dealt with (see Sophocles, *Antigone* 484–5, 525, 677–80), preferring Creon the man to Creon the king and Antigone the woman to Antigone the martyr. In this new context, the authors chose to emphasize the conflict between the world of men—the public management of the city—and the female world—home and family. Both versions are extremely free interpretations of the Greek model, although decisively influenced by Anouilh and Zambrano. In her *Perdição—Exercício sobre Antígona* ("Perdition—Exercise on Antigone", 1991), Correia, a well-known and award-winning Portuguese writer, adds new female components to Sophocles' list of characters, with Antigone being accompanied by her sister, her aunt, Eurydice, and also a Nurse (like in Anouilh). Besides, she also multiplies the levels at which Antigone and the Nurse act, those of life and death;¹²⁹ from the afterlife, the two women, who can hear the dialogues of the living, reveal and comment on hidden feelings and intentions. The chorus intervenes at the beginning and during the intervals of the action, making explicit the overall symbolism of the play: it is all about the confrontation between the instinct of women (*physis*, "nature"), bacchantes to whom Dionysus promises freedom and a genuine contact with nature, and men's ambition, satisfied only by the city and its conflicts. The traditional opposition between divine law and human law is replaced here by the tension between maternal instinct and social order, personified in the female and male elements. This Antigone-as-woman, whose life path is reviewed in the play, is living a profound conflict, not with Creon now, but rather with herself, with her distorted, incestuous origin, with the lack of affective protection in exile, and with her society-imposed

129 The graphic layout of the text is divided into two columns topped by captions: "The Living" and "The Dead". The two dead women, Antigone and the Nurse, have a series of brief commentaries running parallel to the action. Their voices from beyond the grave are a kind of echo of a consciousness that reads and interprets the words and actions of the Living. To some extent, these voices take over the role of a tragic chorus as they comment on the action.

woman condition so alien to her wishes—all elements that had transformed her into a frustrated woman. Her act of rebelliousness is not grounded in a duty to comply with a higher law, or even in her dedication to her family, but rather in personal reasons which each of her interlocutors tries to discern: a desire for prominence and a taste for martyrdom? A tantrum thrown by an unloved child? Or simply “something that was meant to happen”? As everyone finally recognizes, to such a strange creature, so deeply unrooted and so generally misunderstood, only death makes sense.

In *Antes que a Noite Venha* (“Before the Night Comes”, 1992), by professor and writer Eduarda Dionísio, Antigone shares a sequence of monologues with other famous heroines in stories of love and death—Juliet, Castro,¹³⁰ Medea. There is really no dramatic structure, rather a coherent narrative that unfolds through the four heroines with their independent interventions. In her three poetic prose monologues, far from the Theban palace and in the lonely confinement of a cave, Antigone addresses three interlocutors—“her resigned sister”, “her (un)forgotten lover”, and “her dead brother”: these three interlocutors make it clear that her central concerns are family affections (Creon is absent from this reflection). Both the space—the cave—and the time—between what is life no more and what is not yet the final extinction—are elements common to Zambrano’s *La tumba de Antígona* (“Antigone’s tomb”). Dionísio’s Antigone is only a woman for whom her past and her joy of living have vanished with the loss of a beloved brother. Love, marriage and children, all of it has become part of a hostile world from which only death can release her. It is with pleasure that Antigone makes contact, through her eyes, her ears, and her skin with that condition which, paradoxically, has become the *raison d’être* of her ephemeral, empty life.

Lastly, also in the Portuguese language, two versions inspired by the Theban myth written by Brazilian author Jorge Andrade, *Pedreira das Almas* (“Quarry of Souls”, 1950, performed in 1958) and *As Confrarias* (“The Fraternities”, 1965)¹³¹ should be mentioned; they both deal with the history of Minas Gerais in the

130 Inês de Castro is the Portuguese contribution to this list of heroines of love and death stories. This Spanish lady was the protagonist of an adulterous passion for the heir of the Portuguese crown, prince D. Pedro, and was sentenced to death because their children were seen as a danger to the political independence of the kingdom. This episode (14th century) became a kind of national myth and has inspired two tragedies: *Castro*, by António Ferreira (1587) and *A nova Castro* (“The new Castro”), by João Baptista Gomes Júnior (18th century).

131 Andrade (1986). Both plays, *Confrarias* (“Fraternities”) and *Pedreira das almas* (“Quarry of Souls”), are included in a cycle of 10 creations published under the title *Marta, a Árvore e o Relógio* (“Marta, the tree, and the clock”; 1970, 21986).

18th and 19th centuries and the revolutionary movement for a more decentralized power in the country.¹³² The Brazilian reception of Greek myths and their aesthetics did not preclude Portuguese intermediation, despite the fact that after its independence movement (1822) Brazil naturally followed its own political and cultural path, and necessarily adapted its own reading to its new historical contexts. Both plays deal with the problem of the condition and the place of black people in Brazilian society. In *Pedreira das almas* ("Quarry of Souls"), Mariana¹³³ is Antigone, while Gabriel takes up the role of Haemon, both leaders of the rebel forces against the government forces and the local conservative resistances; they both lead a group of people who plan to leave the village of Pedreira—when the mining resources start to show signs of exhaustion—in search for a better life. Then, Martiniano / Polynices, another revolutionary, is captured and killed by Vasconcelos / Creon, the leader of the absolutist forces who fight the liberals, and an order is issued to keep his body unburied, until Gabriel, the fleeing dissident, is reported and delivered to the authorities. Urbana / Jocasta / Eurydice (symbolizing the defence of the establishment and the disagreement about the exodus) dies of a broken heart over the body of her dead son. The malaise deepens throughout the city, instigated by the women and even by Vasconcelos' soldiers. At last, even after Creon suspends the persecution and lets the population go, Mariana decides to stay behind in the now empty village, together with her dead; her fate is to never leave the village, a kind of tomb of all the hopes she had one day, and to give up her whole life project in the name of death. In a hybrid mix of creeds, the action is set at the church square, with all its Christian ornamentation; this is the place of rituals that mix the classical background of the play with the sounds of Brazilian music.

In *As Confrarias* ("Fraternities"), Marta, the protagonist who possesses characteristics of a number of different figures (Antigone, Agave, and, also from Christian mythology, Saint Quiteria¹³⁴ and the Virgin Mary), goes on a

132 The action takes place in the 1840s, a decade marked by 13-year-old D. Pedro II's rise to power. The absence of a stable central power as the popular uprisings scattered over a number of different regions divide Brazil between liberals (with a more decentralized vision of the exercise of power) and conservatives (who defend a centralist monarchy), with both tendencies seeking to manipulate the young king. In the meantime, southern Brazil experiences a change from a mining economy, with the exhaustion of the gold ores, into an agricultural economy.

133 Symbolically, Mariana is also the name of a city in the Minas Gerais State, well known for its gold and precious stones deposits.

134 Saint Quiteria (5th century AD) was a victim of her own father, who beheaded her due to her religious beliefs. According to legend, after she had been beheaded, Quiteria visited a

pilgrimage from church to church, in the company of Quitéria, a black prostitute who had been her son José's lover, seeking to bury him (a mestizo), at a time when those rituals were performed inside the temples and controlled by the different brotherhoods. The poor had no access to such rites, given the strict social, racial and political rules of those groups. For those reasons, Marta's attempt is finally unsuccessful. However, this mother enjoys a degree of pleasure in this refusal;¹³⁵ unlike Sophocles' Antigone, she does not rush to bury her son secretly, because, in truth, she does to some extent enjoy inhaling the putrid smell of the body that upsets power.

In mid-20th century, another colonial context saw the emergence of *Antigòn an Kreyòl* ("Antigone in Creole"), by Haitian poet Félix Morisseau-Leroy (1912–1998), first performed in 1953,¹³⁶ marking the beginning of a great plan: the creation of a national Haitian literature in Creole, inspired by Greek tragedy, which, in turn, was the basis of European theatre. The new features are profound and quite significant; besides expressing herself in Creole, Antigone is identified with a Vodou goddess, which suggests a 'resistance' against French and Catholicism as the official language and religion of Haiti. The political, social and cultural echoes of this choice may be described in the following words:¹³⁷ "Both the hybrid syntax of Creole and the belief system of Vodou had long represented those marginalized by the small Francophone and Catholic elite that had mostly ruled since the time of independence." A single word, 'No', brings Antigone close to the black inhabitants of colonized Haiti, which suggests an expression of freedom and of resistance against the oppressor.¹³⁸ Generally coincident with Sophocles' play, the action is framed by a religious and ritualistic context, where Vodou spirits, who forsake Creon and support Antigone, actively participate in the events.

Other conflicts that took place in Europe during the 20th century have, in the last decades, fed the theme, which has maintained its relevance and its topicality in new, revised re-readings. For instance, the war of independence

temple, guided by an angel, carrying her own head in her arms. The doors of the temple that opened before Quiteria seem to close upon Marta.

135 Maybe her similitude to Agave resides in the exposure of her son's dead body which she holds in her arms and describes as *his head* (Andrade (1970) 29).

136 See Fradinger (2011b) 127–46. The author continued his work on Antigone in a poem included in his collection *Diacoute 2* (1972) and again, in 1978, in two dramas, *Wa Kreyon* ("King Kreon") and *Pèp La* ("The people").

137 Fradinger (2011b) 128.

138 Notwithstanding the fact that Haiti was the first Iberoamerican nation to become independent (1804), its dependence on the United States was determined by the country's geography as well as by the history of the following years.

against the United Kingdom, which sought to define the political status of both Irelands and has plagued the Irish territory since the 1920s, again generates a renewed interest in the subject, now read under different perspectives (gender, political, ritualistic). Irish poet and novelist Brendan Kennelly (born 1936), for example,¹³⁹ gave the title of *Antigone* (1984) to one of his plays where he privileges feminism. The preference for this perspective went in parallel with the long public debate on women's conditions as well as issues like sex, abortion, and divorce. Some similarities are noted between Antigone and Deirdre,¹⁴⁰ the heroine of the Irish myth, who is a symbol of rebellion in her standing for her own feelings against patriarchal tradition. The action focuses on women's freedom of thought and attitude *versus* the imposition of a male-dominated tradition. Despite being presented as a translation, the play underwent a change of plans, described by its author in the following words: "worked from late nineteenth-century translations, six or seven of them, then put them away and wrote it out of my head."¹⁴¹ These words suggest that the poet's intervention included the incorporation of elements from his own cultural context and his personal literary taste. Irish poet and critic Tom Paulin's (born 1949) reading of *Antigone*, *The Riot Act* (1984), focuses on a symbolic interpretation of the confrontations between Loyalists and Republicans in Northern Ireland, which were intensified after the 1960s, and makes Antigone a paradigm of rebelliousness. His Creon seems to echo the rhetoric tones of the Democratic Unionist Party leader, Ian Paisley, symbolizing the repressive cruelty inflicted upon Ireland at that moment in history. The vitriolic tone of the king's words serves to illustrate a world devoid of human warmth and laden with repression, where family, ethical, and religious interests must surrender to the demands of the State.¹⁴² As for Antigone, she clearly evokes the figure of Bernadette Devlin, a human rights activist who embodies sacrifice in the name of the collective values centrally present in the action.

Greece, ravaged by civil war (1946–1949) between right wing and left wing forces after World War II, was not immune to the symbolic capabilities of its old Antigone. An interesting case is the version of Greek novelist, poet and translator Aris Alexandrou (1922–1978), written in prison (1951), as if preceding the famous *The Island* later contextualized in the Robben Island prison in

139 Macintosh (2011) 90 lists the Irish authors who, besides those mentioned above, have dealt with the theme from the mid-1980s onward: in the 80s, Aidan Carl Matthews' *Antigone* and Pat Murphy's film *Anne Devlin*.

140 Macintosh (2011) 97.

141 Dillon/Wilmer (2005) 150.

142 Macintosh (2011) 93.

South Africa.¹⁴³ Alexandrou himself, who was a leftist, had lived the experience of internal 'exile'—confinement in the islands, in his own country—for political reasons, at the Aï Stratis prison, on an Aegean Sea island. Under Nazi occupation, his *Antigone*, although a leftist, disagrees and resists, for sentimental reasons, to the killing of a German defector—who flees from a dictatorship he abhors—and to the prohibition of burying his body for which her own partisans and fellow fighters are responsible. This character incorporates the roles of Sophocles' Haemon and Polynices. The disobedience and the freedom of thought that *Antigone* represents lead her companions to sentence her to death. In the meantime, in Act II, Nikodimos, the same Greek left-wing commander who had sentenced the defector Andronikos to death, is now the victim of the present Greek commander, also called Andronikos.¹⁴⁴ At his order, he is exposed to the violence of the right, in a suicide mission, which ends with him dead and unburied; another *Antigone* repeats her act of piety, despite all risks. The following comment addresses exactly this symmetry:¹⁴⁵ "This repetition emphasises the tendency of the Greek Left throughout this entire historical period to suspect irrationally and turn against members of their own group or those who wanted to side with them." This was later expanded as follows:¹⁴⁶ "The work also revisits the concepts of patriotism and heroism in light of the author's quest for the meaning of truth and intellectual freedom amidst hypocrisy and terror." Beyond any partisan interests, *Antigone* remains faithful to her own name and her acts are guided by human values.

War traumas have persistently continued to find a voice in French theatre in the late 20th century, though not as strongly as in the 1940s, while family relationships and affections become increasingly important. In 1990, French scholar Jean-Marc Lanteri (born 1962) writes his play *Antigone* (42),¹⁴⁷ now as an evocation. The love story, which is also a story of resistance, of a woman who, against all threats and risks, buries the body of her fiancée, killed in the war, is set in a Warsaw ghetto. At an increasingly paradigmatic and globalizing

143 See below, 459–60. Alexandrou's play was very interestingly performed in 2003, under the direction of Victor Arditto, at Thessaloniki. On the topic of drama performed in Greek prisons by political prisoners between 1940 and 1960, see Van Steen (2011), which includes the Greek version and the English translation of Alexandrou's play (172–306).

144 These two acts deal with the most relevant aspects of Greek history in the 1940s: the first portrays the left-wing resistance against the Nazi occupation, while the second examines the internal division between the left and the right. In the end, it seems that violence is really not much different, irrespective of the enemy against whom one fights.

145 Van Steen (2001) 239.

146 Van Steen (2011) 157.

147 Lanteri (1990).

level, French playwright Richard Demarcy (born 1942) produces his *Les voyageurs et les ombres. Oedipe, Antigone sur le chemin* ("The travellers and the shadows. Oedipus, Antigone on the way", 1994).¹⁴⁸ This Antigone is the 'sister' of the whole of Humanity, especially of those who are victims of the atrocities of war and are left unburied; this is the Theban princess in her full universality and timelessness. The setting is a cemetery, by nature a sacred and anachronistic place; the figures that populate it are also anachronistic: Oedipus and Antigone, brought back from Antiquity. The cemetery is contemporary, as are other visitors, i.e., the two actors and an Antigone 2, who discuss among themselves the deep meaning of the myth in its Sophoclean version, as well as the true personality of the princess of Thebes.

As the pressure of colonialism gradually stopped afflicting the different countries that had been fighting for their independence (from the 1960s onwards), Western Africa became another fertile territory as regards the reception of classical themes. *Antigone* was one of the first manifestations of this interest. As always her episode articulated elements of the political reality of the moment and a specific dramatic tradition with classical tradition and its European re-readings—which of course also represented a love-hate relationship between the colonised and the coloniser's culture. A rewriting of *Antigone* titled *Odale's choice*, by Caribbean scholar and author Kamau Brathwaite (born 1930), was first performed in Ghana, in 1962, at the Mfantisman Secondary School, Saltpond,¹⁴⁹ serving as a basis for a school activity supervised by the author himself (who was an important figure in the educational system of the country) and performed by the pupils. This production, whose background is the achievement of Ghana's Independence (1957) vis-à-vis the British rule—and for that reason it becomes a founding text in a nascent culture—circulated also in Kenya and Nigeria.¹⁵⁰ The educational objective of this text, meant for schools, explains the presence of a degree of compression in the rewriting of the Greek myth. Some characters—Haemon, Tiresias, and Eurydice—were eliminated, and a number of scenes, such as the Antigone/Creon *agon*

148 Demarcy (1994).

149 This is a type of initiative that uses a referential text like *Antigone* in the training of the young generations with the aim of establishing a sense of nation and of society.

150 The play was published in 1967 (London: Evans). See Hardwick (2004) 234; Goff/Simpson (2007) 220. According to the latter, after having been performed at a school, the play was staged in the Caribbean (1967) by Derek Walcott's Trinidad Theatre Workshop, a professional company this time. Brathwaite had a similar life path: "born in Barbados, educated partly in England, resident in Ghana between 1955 and 1962, he then returned to the Caribbean and now bi-locates between Barbados and New York." Given the author's Caribbean origins, his production incorporated features of both continents.

("dispute"), were abbreviated. The following comment draws a parallel between the play and the historical moment in Ghana as the first African country to gain its independence from a colonizing power:¹⁵¹ "The bleakest aspects of the play are read as representations of both the necessary sacrifices that must be made to achieve independence and the unnecessary sacrifices that may be demanded after independence." In some specific aspects, Brathwaite's version exhibits an influence from Brecht: Polynices (now Tawia) is killed by Creon and not by his brother; as for Creon, he is given an entirely negative tyrannical profile, as a paradigm of the dictatorship imposed by the colonising power at first, and then of the tyrannical regimes that were established in post-colonial Africa. On the other hand, Antigone / Odale's determination seems to leave no margin for the king's arguments or for the exercise of his authority;¹⁵² that is to say, Creon has the power, although he does not have the corresponding authority. Thus, Brathwaite disrupts the Sophoclean balance between the two figures and what they stand for in their agonistic confrontation, and gives this new Antigone a dominant position. The title, on the other hand, seems to create a false expectation concerning Odale / Antigone: she supposedly faces a dilemma between choosing to disobey the king or standing up for the family values; actually, she affirms the categorical nature of a principle and exempts herself from any possible doubt (28): *There was nothing to chose [sic]. Either I had to obey your law, or the law of my gods. We must bury our dead when they die.* In carrying out her act of disobedience—with Polynices' funeral ceremonies taking place on stage—, Odale could count on some allies, such as one of the Guards, who, surprisingly, not only allows her to perform the ritual but, in order to protect her, also denies that it has ever happened.¹⁵³ His attitude motivates the other Guards to silently acquiesce, revealing the fragility of the king's authoritarianism. Odale is now challenged by a choice: either to take advantage of this silence and deny her act, or to take full responsibility for it. By deciding to claim the act as her own Odale leaves Creon with a single choice: to sentence her to death. Her death will not take place in the solitude of a cave—she is exposed to the birds of prey, exactly like Polynices / Tawia's body. With this order, an exception among the versions known to us, the king provides his niece with the possibility of accomplishing her act of disobedience by burying

151 Goff/Simpson (2007) 10.

152 Goff /Simpson (2007) 221–3.

153 Brathwaite describes the Guards' language as inspired by the local dialect. Combining it with English, the language of the colonizer, the author establishes a mix of cultures in a territory that had been a colonial space till recently. Language also distinguishes the play's 'noble' characters from the 'common' ones.

her brother whom she herself replaces as an unburied body. The final image is therefore that of Antigone-as-martyr instead of one of Creon's object of punishment, as in Sophocles' closing scene.

In 1994, in Ibadan, Nigeria, writer Femi Osofisan (born 1946) produced *Tegonni, an African Antigone*, where the Sophoclean tradition is re-contextualized in a 19th century that is marked by issues of racism, imperialism, colonialism, and power conflicts. The protagonist is a Yoruba princess, Tegonni, who is soon to marry a British army officer,¹⁵⁴ Allan Jones, at a time when Britain sought to establish its rule over African territories. A political issue underlies the action, namely the conflict between military regimes and Nigerian pro-democracy movements, along with social issues, such as the conflict between racist feelings and the possibility of love between people of different cultures.¹⁵⁵ British authority is represented by Lt.-General Carter-Ross, the new Creon, who is the voice of a profoundly racist ideology, materialized in violent behaviors, and who issues instructions on how the bodies of Tegonni's brothers should be treated. Like his Theban counterpart, this Creon mistakes 'orders' for 'law' and is the prototype of the consummate tyrant; his nature as a colonizer does not entirely explain his authoritarian stance, for the play includes cases of friendship between characters from both parties, demonstrating that peaceful coexistence is indeed possible. On the other hand, the fratricidal duel also introduces into the plot the divisions between Africans themselves and the impacts of the civil war, through the relationship between the different groups and the colonizers. Lastly, a relevant gender tension is also present in the play: Tegonni was increasingly asserting her position as an exception within her community, seeking to forge her own life path, and she decided to dedicate herself to bronze sculpture, which no Yoruba woman had ever done before. This was a sign of radicalization that would also create divisions among the Africans. As far as the play's structure is concerned, the author adds elements of Yoruba culture (music, dance, myths) to the original version; these

154 The topic of—intra-racial—marriage is quite relevant in this version, which is clearly different from the Sophoclean original. Goof/Simpson (2007) 330 identify Anouilh's influence in this respect; indeed, the French author was quite influential as regards Osofisan's literary personality in general. They also stress the deep controversy apropos the union between the two communities in the play, British and Yoruba, as well as between two men—Jones and Carter-Ross—who, despite not being father and son (like Creon and Haemon), still represent an equivalent contrast in terms of both ideology and generation as regards the phenomenon of colonialism.

155 The play had been first performed, as early as 1994, in Atlanta (Emory University), Georgia, USA. Hardwick (2004) 235. Goff/Simpson (2007) 321–64 have dedicated an extensive study to this play.

elements are predominant in the first scenes, producing an autonomous version, distanced also from the coloniser's intermediate input.

Finally, *Antigone's* range of influence in the 20th century included the Asian continent, where the theme was adapted to, and moulded by, the conflicts that were taking place at different moments and in different areas of that vast territory. The establishment of India as an independent state (1947), which required the integration into the Union of different spaces with their own specific political identities (as was the case of Manipur, in the north-eastern part of the peninsula) encouraged that revitalization, affording new creative opportunities.¹⁵⁶ The confrontations between pro-independence resistant forces and integration supporters, the claim for independence vis-à-vis the Indian government (starting in 1960), and the violence against the Manipur people that it instigated provided the context for multiple productions of *Antigone*.¹⁵⁷ In the analysis of this phenomenon in Manipur, central productions have been considered: a replication of Anouilh, directed by Nongthombam Premchand (1995),¹⁵⁸ and a performance of Sophocles' *Antigone*, directed by Kshetrimayum Jugindro Singh (2004).¹⁵⁹ The specific nature of these two performances is highly symbolic, as they portray the clash between regional autonomy and the interests of a national community.

The most recent French *Antigones*, those of the 21st century, clearly suggest the continued vitality of the myth, whose readings are, as always, adapted

156 See Mee (2011) 107–26.

157 Besides the two rewrites she analyses, Mee (2011) 107 mentions many other productions in the same context.

158 This return to Anouilh aims to create a very conspicuous parallel between the German occupation of France, which was the background to the French author's production, and the occupation of Manipur by the Indian Union. The French text was then translated by Arambam Somorendro and infused with multiple allusions to the target context. The stage-setting included symbolic elements intended to identify *Antigone* as Manipur and *Creon* as India, in a confrontation of a mainly political nature. Perhaps the execution of *Antigone*, who was shot by *Creon*—reproducing the summary execution of the Manipur rebels at the hands of Indian troops—is also one of the details that contributes to the adaptation of the source text, Anouilh, in this case, to the specific conditions of this rewriting.

159 Mee (2011) 114 defines Jugindro's adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone* as follows: "His *Antigone* fought for regional autonomy by asserting a regional identity through regional performance practices. He used traditional Meitei performance to valorize Meitei culture and challenge notions of so-called national culture." This means that the autonomous 'brand' of the Manipuri culture as distinct from the tradition imposed by the British rule and later by the India occupation depends mostly on the stage-setting and other performance elements like songs, dances, and rituals.

to the concerns of each specific social moment.¹⁶⁰ The new interpretations mostly include cultural conflicts in diverse communities that are brought into contact as a result of the great 21st century migratory movements, and which have a resonance in a specific facet of Antigone: her ability to say ‘no’. Examples of this approach are *Variations Antigone* (“Antigone Variations”, 2009), by playwright Eugène Durif (born 1950), staged by Philippe Flasquaut (Compagnie Création Ephémère);¹⁶¹ *C’est là qu’un jour je jouerai Antigone* (“That is where I shall one day play Antigone”, 2009), by playwright Françoise de Chaxel (born 1940), staged by Jean-Claude Gal (Théâtre du Pélican), which shortens cultural distances by bringing the Greek heroine closer to Mirabai, the Indian princess; and actor Ladjali Diallo’s (born 1980) *J’kiffe Antigone* (“I dig Antigone”, 2009), staged by Alberto García Sánchez, which connects the myth’s tradition with life on the Parisian suburbs.¹⁶²

In *C’est là qu’un jour je jouerai Antigone* (“That is where I shall one day play Antigone”), Françoise de Chaxel projects onto her text the social work developed among communities of ‘problematic’ youths or even delinquents, who come from difficult neighbourhoods. This is perhaps the reason why her *Antigone* is meant as an intercultural dialogue, based on the lives of different young women,¹⁶³ in such varied landscapes as France and India though nevertheless connected by parallel life experiences. “The work focuses on the condition of adolescent girls, based on a compilation of testimonies that gradually becomes a proteiform female verbal territory, with alternating monologues and dialogues in which the speakers talk about love.”¹⁶⁴ That is, each of the girls’ accounts, alternating between France and India, describes an experience related to women’s marital status, which is to say, to their subordination to men. Within this *agon* (“dispute”) of cultures and genders Antigone is seen as a symbol of the West, while Mirabai,¹⁶⁵ a 16th century Hindu princess, represents the Hindu world, both women sharing the same attitude of resistance.

160 This is the scope of Urdicjan’s survey (2015), French *Antigones* produced between 2009 and 2013.

161 For a comment, see below, 461.

162 Urdicjan (2015) 289–92; Urdicjan (in press).

163 The play was performed at Clermont-Ferrand with the collaboration of local youths working together with theatre professionals.

164 Urdicjan (2015) 293.

165 Mirabai, according to legend, refused to be immolated when her husband died, as tradition dictated. This refusal turns her into a symbol of rebelliousness vis-à-vis traditional law and the subordination required from married women, even beyond their husbands’ death.

Ladji Diallo, a French man of theatre of Mali descent, returns to the famous myth with *J'kiffe Antigone* ("I dig Antigone"),¹⁶⁶ a 'dissonant' text that combines passages from Sophocles with other sociological texts on working-class neighbourhoods, adding also African songs which signal the author's own cultural roots. With the autobiographical aim of someone—both author and character—in search of his own origins, Diallo tells the story of a young, uprooted African man who revives the values of rebelliousness through Antigone. Rebelliousness is the element that brings together such profoundly different worlds as the Paris suburbs, with their immigrant communities, and the world of Greek mythology; two youths who live to such contradictory rhythms as those of a tragic chorus and rap music earn the focus of our attention.

The Antigone motif had important echoes in 21st century Spanish drama as well. In 2003, at the 49th Mérida Classical Theatre Festival, Memé Tabares, a writer from Extremadura, staged her Sophocles / Anouilh-influenced *Antigone*.¹⁶⁷ The cross-breeding of these two sources resulted in the incorporation of such elements as a relevant network of secondary characters, including a Nurse, adding some aspects of the heroine's personal life, in line with Anouilh's adaptation of Sophocles, and also the character of Tiresias, which preserves the final divine element in the play's conclusion. As a result of the same textual intersection, Antigone's personality is presented as progressing from a character with childlike traits, still dependent on her Nurse's affection and anxious about a secret, undisclosable plan, to an adult, self-willed woman, fearless of all risks, in line with the Sophoclean pattern. The boundary that separates these two phases is signalled by an encounter between Antigone and dead Polynices—maybe a symbol of his burial—while the off-stage voices of Haemon, Ismene, and the Nurse try to call Antigone back to the society of the living, in an interesting conflict between life and death. The living address Antigone with affection, appealing to her childhood facet; the decision to follow Polynices, which they witness, is hers.¹⁶⁸

As recently as 2015, Andrés Pociña, the noted Spanish scholar and also an author of a number of dramatic fictions dealing with classical themes (born 1947), produced an *Antígona frente a los jueces* ("Antigone before her judges"). Antigone is yet again invited to reflect upon her actions, her emotions and

166 *J'kiffe* is a slang expression used by young people who live in the suburbs of big French cities and who come mostly from Northern Africa.

167 Unpublished. Information obtained in Llagüerri Pubill (2015).

168 These strategies—the staging of life and death, Antigone's division between the two levels of expression, the affective presence of her Nurse—are quite similar to those used by Portuguese author Hélia Correia in her own version, also strongly influenced by Anouilh.

her affections, in this case not in a monologue—as it has frequently been the case—but before the judges who scrutinize her and the ‘Povo’ (“People”) who pay attention to her words during a trial hearing. The judgement and possible punishment for her disobedience are here transferred from the tyrant to the court, which seems to be a demonstration of a democratic inclination on the part of her accuser, Creon; the traditional *agon* (“dispute”) is now adapted to the rhetoric of a court of law, conducted by both the prosecution and the defence. As for the jury, which includes men and women with different degrees of commitment to the royal house, they express before the accused their different opinions on the Labdacians’ life story, going back to Oedipus and Jocasta’s generation, seeking the origin of their crisis in their lineage. The different interpretations of Polynices’ burial on the part of both the judges and the people are a central element in this version; the questioning, however, also assesses the positions of Antigone’s traditional interlocutors, her parents and her siblings. All the threads of the story are unfolded within the walls of the court room, and are subject to a multifaceted examination as well as to controversial interpretations.

Focused on topical problems is also an innovative version of the myth by Italian author Valeria Parrella (1974–), *Antigone* (2012),¹⁶⁹ following a widely discussed and disseminated case of euthanasia (that of Eluana Englaro, 2009). In this text, the eternally defiant heroine fights for the right of her brother—who, though not yet a corpse, was imprisoned in a lifeless body and ‘condemned’ to years of irreversible coma—to a dignified death, even if it meant that she had to confront, like her ancient Greek counterpart, the prohibition issued by ‘Il Legislatore’ (“The Legislator”), another Creon, the unyielding, anonymous face of the State’s authoritarian power. This paradigm addresses the prohibition of euthanasia in place in many contemporary societies. Antigone’s act of piety is expressed here in disconnecting what is for Polynices his tenuous connection to life. Before the prison that awaits her—her punishment cave—Parrella’s Antigone chooses freedom and suicide, a death inflicted by her own hands. In this renewal of the gesture of her ancestral model, the heroine of our times re-embodies the defence of human rights and individual dignity against the polemic edicts of the State. The successful paradox of this rewrite lies in the fact that a play that deals with one of the major issues that challenges humanity in the 21st century is structured on

169 Lauriola dedicates two very stimulating texts to this new reading of Antigone, one of them focused on an analysis of Parrella’s text (2014) and the other (2015) based on her own interpretation, in the light of the same criteria, of the parallel case of Brittany Maynard which occurred in 2014 in the USA.

the basis of a tragedy, with its traditional characters and its no less conventional aesthetic design. Only a 'Letter', written by Antigone as she dies and added to the exodos, supplements the heroine's course with a reflection suggestive of other monologues by other authors (Zambrano, especially)¹⁷⁰ that occur in the space between life and death, which propitiates a weighing of the heroine's whole life.

An extremely interesting translation / adaptation that echoes the many philosophical and dramatic readings of Sophocles' play is *Antigo Nick*, by Anne Carson (2012), a Canadian classicist, and also a poet and translator (born 1981).¹⁷¹ The immediate presentation of the text is unconventional; handwritten in capital letters, without punctuation, interrupted by illustrations by Bianca Stone, it announces itself as an *avant-garde* version of the Greek text, permeated by many later intertextualities that are embodied by the characters themselves (Hegel, Beckett, Brecht). It is therefore not a 'translation' as such but rather a recreation that omits considerable segments of the source text while adding suggestive contemporary elements. Different commentators¹⁷² have signalled the 'comic tone' of this rewrite which is in deep contrast with the tragic density of the original. On the other hand, Carson stresses the different marks that the successive readings or rewritings have imprinted on Stone's illustrations, starting with the dialogue between the two sisters, Antigone and Ismene, whose choice of words shows traces of Hegel¹⁷³ and Brecht blended into Sophocles' lines. The text includes a large number of different innovative elements: a minimalist version of some long *rheseis* ("speeches"), reduced to a mere one or two lines, or even a single word; the remarkable vocabulary which defines the traits of both the action and the characters;¹⁷⁴ the inclusion of 'explanatory notes' in the body of the text, delivered by the characters they refer to; the addition of a new character called Nick, a silent presence whose only action is 'to measure things', like a materialization of time that signals the evolving stages of the

170 See above, 414–5.

171 Among her translations of Greek authors are Sappho's, Simonides', Aeschylus', Sophocles' and Euripides'.

172 As Steiner, for instance. See *The Times Literary Supplement* (2012).

173 Antigone begins by quoting Beckett's *A Piece of Monologue* —"Birth was the death of him."

174 The text that replaces Creon's first great *rhesis*, his inauguration, may significantly illustrate that: *Here are Kreon's verbs for today: ADJUDICATE / LEGISLATE / SCANDALIZE / CAPITALIZE* and, *Here are Kreon's nouns: MEN / REASON / TREASON / DEATH / SHIP OF STATE / MINE*. This language, in its anachronism, portrays an autocrat; the syntactical disparities raised by the chorus—*mine isn't a noun*—are also, according to Creon's logic, quite pertinent.

story and persists beyond the exit of the other characters. In point of fact, he is a symbol within a creation characterized by a high level of anachronism in its association of the ancient with the contemporary. But it also represents the mark of that tragic, vertiginous time on which all human acts and decisions depend.

As concerns Portugal, the theme re-emerges in Portuguese drama in 2007 with playwright Armando Nascimento Rosa's (born 1966) version *Antígona Gelada* ("Frozen Antigone"),¹⁷⁵ which follows a very unconventional model. Different from any other Portuguese rewrite of the myth, this play is inspired by film models like Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids dream of electric sheep?*, adapted to the screen by Ridley Scott under the title of *Blade runner*. *Antígona Gelada* ("Frozen Antigone") is a science fiction dive into the future, set in Tebas 9, a space station located in a satellite called Caronte ("Charon"). After the death of the two brothers, the edict forbids not Polynices' burial but the preservation of his DNA. Antigone is, in this case, the voice of disillusionment and surrender. "Rosa uses the opposition between the two daughters of Oedipus to make Ismene the successor of Creon's power. At the end of the play, we see the seed of a new tyrannical power growing in her, repeating and perpetuating itself, while Antigone, tired of herself, gives up on life."¹⁷⁶ Because she knows the threat—Creon embodying the dictatorial power of machines and science—Antigone chooses to give up living, entering a process of mortal cryopreservation.

Reflecting European culture, where the theme of Antigone had an enormous projection in the 20th century, in synchrony with the historical experience of the continent, our new century has exported this motif, with an impressive vitality, to Latin America, where the Sophoclean theme went on exhibiting its unfailing flexibility in new geographic and cultural horizons, especially in times of crisis.

In Argentine literature, the interest for the myth continued with, for example, *Antígona[S]: linaje de hembras* ("Antígona[S]: Female Lineage"), by Jorge Huertas (2002), *Antígona...con amor* ("Antigone...with love"), by Hebe Campanella (2003), and *Antígona! No!* ("Antigone! No!"), by Yamila Grandi (2003). All these plays prioritize a common issue: the violence of the regime and the political suppression of citizens who oppose it. Psychologist and scholar Huertas (born 1988) adapts the Sophoclean original to respond to this controversial issue, so predominant in recent Argentine politics. In a musical drama version written in free verse with adapted tango lyrics, he creates

175 Rosa (2008).

176 Fialho (in press).

a context suggestive of Buenos Aires,¹⁷⁷ or even of the history of his country. The text includes Eva Perón as a character (la Embalsamada Peregrina / “the Embalmed Pilgrim”) that stands for the gods or the higher forces of fate of Greek tragedy, being thus placed on a higher level. As a symbol of the politically slandered woman—like a double of Antigone—, whose body was also a victim of terrible vicissitudes, Eva stresses the relevance of female intervention in overcoming the Argentine crisis.¹⁷⁸ Especially focused on immediate events—the attack against General Perón upon his return to the country (1973) after years of exile—, Hebe Campanella’s play explores the sombre years of dictatorship that followed, where the intervention of the political police, identified as ‘Doble S’ (“Double S”)—an assonance with the old Nazi SS—stands out. His Antigone is also the young woman in search of her disappeared brother among the victims of the regime who ends up being shot in public to set an example for potential dissidents. Finally, Yamila Grandi (born 1974), whose title *Antígona! No!* (“Antigone! No!”), besides denoting Antigone’s rebel cry, signifies also the collective abhorrence of the possibility of this terrible suppression of political dissidents being repeated in the future.¹⁷⁹ More specifically, Grandi’s play focuses on the topic of children born from dissident mothers in captivity who are eliminated so that their children can be submitted to the regime, and can thus be given an education in conformity with the State’s ideology. Her Antigone refuses to ‘acknowledge’ the death of her brother, the means used by the regime to validate its actions, and she embarks on an endless search for him. Antigone’s famous act of rebelliousness is translated into her refusal to sign, because signing would mean condoning the regime’s violence.

Also adapted to a very specific context is playwright and actress Perla de la Rosa’s (born 1961) *Antígona: Las voces que incendian el desierto* (“Antigone: the

177 Besides the tangos, Fradinger (2011a) 85 includes other strong identity elements in the play: “Tiresias is Buenos Aires’s fundamental poet, the blind Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986). The city River is also a character, voiced by the women, as it assumes the violent historical role of ‘swallowing’ corpses that Buenos Aires threw into its entrails. There are names of soccer teams, famous streets and parks, names of national newspapers, and even more famous lines from local TV commercials.”

178 Other detailed information on the play is provided by Fradinger (2011a) 84–9; Bañuls/Crespo (2008) 500–4.

179 Pianacci (2008) 111–5, 118–21, 134–8 describes the continuing interest in the Antigone motif in other Latin American countries in the new millennium, mentioning examples like *La ley de Creonte* (“Creon’s law”), by Olga Harmony (Mexico, 2001), *Antígona, historia de objetos perdidos* (“Antigone, a story of lost objects”), by Daniela Cápona Pérez (Chile, 2002); *Antígona y actriz* (“Antigone and actress”), by Carlos Eduardo Satizábal (Colombia, 2004).

voices that set the desert on fire", 2004),¹⁸⁰ which deals with the countless kidnappings and cases of violence against women in contemporary Mexico. The structure of the play includes a prologue followed by 18 scenes and combines a plot based on Sophocles and paraphrases of Anouilh and Brecht's *Antigones*. The action is set in Ciudad Juárez, in the framework of a conflict against a hidden enemy—the rival groups of drug dealers—and where only women who protect themselves by hiding can escape. Those who, like Clara, "se arman de valor y salen a las fábricas" ("arm themselves with courage and go to work at the factories")¹⁸¹ are, on the contrary, sure to be killed. A victim of this undefined violence, Clara's dead body is the object of further aggressions, and when it is left at her family's door, none of her sisters—Isabel and Helena—dares to run the risk of standing up to defend her memory. A new Antigone then emerges, coming back from her long absence, willing to search for her sister Clara (as a kind of Polynices) and to disobey the order of another Creon, who, in order to defend the city's good name, denies the reality of so many murders and disappearances. With Haemon's complicity, she is given access to the city's morgue, where hundreds of corpses accumulate, with the very recent addition of a new one: Clara's. The traditional Polynices is replaced here by a murdered female factory worker, a victim of the violence that has been devastating the city for over a decade. What the new Antigone wishes is not to bury a dead person; her aim is to find the hidden bodies so as to contradict the official version that reports them as non-existent. This project of hers extends the reach of her act from the individual or family scope to a collective dimension. Captured in her disobedience, this Mexican Antigone will confront the authorities, in the usual *agon* ("dispute") though with new arguments adapted to the context. She accuses Creon of condoning what has now become a genocide, leaving it unpunished. Love triumphs in the end; Antigone would have been shot in her fleeing were it not for Haemon's intervention, which saved her. Again driven into exile, Antigone's final words express disenchantment at a city in mourning, with no hope or law, which nothing but grief can redeem.

In this same 21st century, the Asian continent also projects similar human rights issues onto its Antigone rewritings. This is, for instance, the case with

180 In Mora (2005). On this *Antigone*, see Pianacci (2009) 499–507, Hardwick (2016) in press. Perla de la Rosa is a playwright, an actress and a theatre director who is responsible for the Telón de Arena Company; she is also a Professor of Mexican Theatre at the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez. In the same year, another Mexican play was published, involving different motifs from a number of Theban creations by Sophocles—Alejandro Carrillo's *El rey Creón, los límites del cambio* ("King Creon, the limits of change").

181 Mora (2005) 188.

the Turkish actress Sahika Tekand's (born 1959) Theban trilogy (2006), which returns to the Antigone theme in its last piece, titled *Eurydice's cry*.¹⁸² Surely the Kurd issue and the partisan conflicts that led Turkey to a kind of civil war after the 1980s can be seen as an opportunity for a new adaptation of the Theban myth. This version draws heavily on choreography to express the traditional conflict between Antigone and Creon, the tyrannical power he represents, the isolation that gradually surrounds him, in a game of adhesions and divergences that the play enacts. However, the most significant difference between Tekand's play and its Sophoclean model is the replacement of Eurydice's silence (she, who was the last to abandon Creon) with a cry of pain and revolt.

We might conclude with a comment especially in regard to the Francophone world:¹⁸³ "(...) I must note that Antigone crosses the centuries, the borders, the ambits to participate incessantly in public debates—from the noblest to the commonest. In the contemporary agora, Antigone resurrects to support the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo—who are indeed « the contemporary Antigones »—or to advance the programme « African Antigones: The law and the link », which promotes young women's political participation in Francophone Western Africa (Dakar, 2013). But Antigone is also recuperated by identity movements in 21st-century France, where she also feeds political marketing strategies." This is a testimony of Antigone's universal and timeless range of influence.

In the Fine Arts

Visual Arts

In what concerns Greek ceramics, caution is particularly necessary in identifying representations of Sophocles' *Antigone*.¹⁸⁴ It has been admitted that there might be a certain relationship between a number of images preserved in vases and the famous tragedy. One of such cases is that of an Apulian *oenochoe* ("a jar for wine", ca. 330), attributed to Darius the painter and kept in Basel, at the Antikenmuseum.¹⁸⁵ The image drawn on this *oenochoe* seems to clearly reproduce the dialogue between Tiresias and a king and is inspired by the drama scene; however, it is difficult to establish whether it is supposed to

182 See Erincin (2011) 171–83.

183 Urdician (2015) 287.

184 Taplin (2007) 88.

185 BS 473; Taplin n° 23. See Taplin (2007) 93.

depict Oedipus, in *Oedipus the King*, or Creon, in *Antigone*. Another possible relationship might be identified between an Apulian *hydria* (“water carrying-vessel”, ca. 420), preserved in Taranto, Museo Archeologico Nazionale¹⁸⁶ and Sophocles’ play.¹⁸⁷ In *Imagines* 2. 29, Philostratus (2nd century AD) describes a picture, seen in Magna Graecia, that represents the episode of Polynices’ burial by Antigone, underlining some emotional traits of the young woman that embraces the body while she cries.

As regards the later reception of the theme in painting during the 19th century, French neoclassicism is mentioned¹⁸⁸ as a phase where the Theban myth, in its different episodes, was widely used. It has been acknowledged¹⁸⁹ that the tragic characters more widely represented from the 18th century onwards are Oedipus and Antigone;¹⁹⁰ as an example, we may mention Sebastian Norblin’s 1825 painting *Antigone donnant la sépulture à Polynice* (“Antigone burying Polynices”), kept at the École des Beaux Arts, Paris. The scene represents the capture of Antigone by the guards at the moment of her disobedience. The young woman occupies a central, highlighted place, and has her arms open in a wide gesture that creates a space of freedom, protecting her from her captors. This example portrays Antigone’s most popular episode in painting, Polynices’ burial, which had been addressed earlier by Joseph Anton Koch, *Landschaft mit Antigone, die ihren Bruder Polynices beerdigt* (“Landscape with Antigone, who buries her brother Polinices”, 1799) and also by V. J. Robertson, *Antigone strewing dust on the body of her murdered brother Polynices* (1898).¹⁹¹ There is also a curious association between Antigone and Ismene, such as the one portrayed by the German painter Emil Teschendorff in the late 19th century.

The theme was also treated in sculpture. Italian sculptor, painter and architect Antonio Canova (1757–1822) produced a terracotta Antigone wailing

186 134905 (Taplin n° 24).

187 Taplin (2007) 96 believes that the relationship between this image and Sophocles’ play is rather fragile, and he specifies the following elements: “A dignified woman, with a kind of a crown, stands between two young men with spears. They seem to be approaching an older man, holding a stick, even if not straight like a royal scepter. (...) He is standing within the loop of the handle”—maybe Antigone taken by the Guards before Creon.

188 Bañuls/Crespo (2008) 592–3.

189 Constans (1998) 235.

190 Constans (1998) 229–46. To Norblin’s, Bañuls/Crespo (2008) 253 add numerous other paintings, like Koch’s and Robertson’s.

191 The same motive also inspired, for example, Jules Eugene Lenepveu, *Antigone* (1840), Nikiforos Lytras, *Antigone* (1865), Benjamin Constant, *Antigone au chevet de Polynice* (“Antigone beside Polynices”, 1868) and, at the turn of the century, Marie Euphrozyne Spartali, *Antigone from ‘Antigone’ by Sophocles*.

before her brothers' bodies (1798) and American sculptor William Henry Rinehart (1825–1874) depicted her as a sister pouring libations over the death body of her brother (1870).

I shall mention only one 20th century case where the relationship between a literary and a visual reception of the myth is clear. The success of Zambrano's *La tumba de Antígona* ("Antigone's tomb") extended also to plastic expression.¹⁹² "Tommasina Squadrita, a contemporary Italian artist has produced twelve pictorial boards designed on the basis of her previous work on exile. The title of the set of twelve pieces is *Though*, although each has its own title: Dawn, Confession, Blessed, Exile, Entrails, Signature, Guide, Embryonic Logos 1st and 2nd, plus another three boards specifically dedicated to Antigone and directly inspired by María Zambrano. This choice of titles demonstrates how Tommasina Squadrita focused on topics that corresponded to key-words in the thought of the Spanish philosopher."

Music

During the 18th century, at the height of the Baroque period,¹⁹³ Antigone seems to have appealed to Italian opera composers, and, although numerous musical scores were produced, I will mention only a few expressive examples. The first opera performance of the old myth took place in San Cassiano, in the Carnival of 1718, with music by Giuseppe Orlandini and libretto by Benedetto Pasqualigo. In the version adopted in this libretto, Antigone (the only surviving offspring of Oedipus) had a daughter, Jocasta, by Osmenes, the son of her tyrannical husband Creon. Here Jocasta is believed to be the daughter of the shepherd Ormindo, showing the high degree of freedom in the opera reformulation of the Sophoclean reference.¹⁹⁴

192 Moraglio, *apud* Camacho Rojo (2012) 25.

193 *L'Antigona delusa da Alceste* ("Antigone deceived by Alcestis"), with libretto by Aureli Aurelio and score by Pietro Andrea Ziani (1660), is identified by Bañuls/Crespo (2008) 584 as the first opera on the theme, followed, in 1690, by Marc Antonio Ziani's *Creonte* ("Creon"). Steiner (1995) 21 mentions, after 1699—when Alessandro Scarlatti's *Creonte* ("Creon") was composed—until 1799—the year of Francesco Basili's *Antigona*—thirty operas dedicated to the theme. He also makes a selection (1995) 194–5 of the most important ones (cf. also Bañuls, Crespo (2008) 584–5). Fraisse (1974) 64 claims that opera freed the theme from the lugubrious tone that had been accompanying it. In this period, music performances, with their luxurious presentation, coincide with festive occasions.

194 Selfridge-Field (2008) 340.

In the year 1772, the extremely successful opera in three acts *Antigona*, by Italian composer Tommaso Traetta (1727–1779), with libretto by Marco Coltellini, premièred in St. Petersburg, Russia, at a time when both artists were employed at the service of Catherine the Great in the Russian imperial court. The active characters in this dramatic structure—besides Antigone and Ismene, Creon, Haemon, and Adrastus—are *per se* an indication of the fact that the opera was an adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone*. After Oedipus' expulsion from Thebes, after his crimes are revealed, a duel between the two male heirs of the throne, Eteocles and Polynices, is prepared outside the city walls to solve the problem of the king's succession. The duel is refereed by two authorities, Creon, for the Thebans, and Adrastus, for the Argives. The episode, performed by dancers, ends in a fratricide, and the ensuing traditional action—Creon's rise to power, his prohibition of Polynices' burial, and Antigone's disobedience—follows its traditional course. The stage-setting explores certain specific aspects, such as Polynices' funeral ceremony clandestinely performed by Antigone, present in Sophocles only by means of a simple, albeit expressive description; simultaneously, some magnificent festivities are held at the temple of Jupiter to celebrate the deliverance of Thebes from all the dangers that had faced the city. The false information according to which Haemon, who had been accused of treason by his father before Antigone acknowledged her disobedience, had committed suicide enables Creon to imagine the pain of holding his son's dead body, the impossibility of facing the mother's grief, the horror of hearing Antigone's lamentation—all of these included as part of the action in Sophocles' conclusion. This is how the major news, a happy ending, is prepared: instead of Creon's obstinacy and punishment, condemned as he is in Sophocles to survive and witness the family's ruin, Coltellini's Creon is able to repent in time to save both his niece and his son Haemon from the suicide they are planning to commit. And the opera thus ends with a wedding ceremony, heralding an auspicious marriage of the two lovers who have been rescued from the cave.¹⁹⁵

In the 19th century, while the rewriting of new *Antigones* had but a pale expression in drama, the performance of Sophocles' original version was an important landmark as regards the continuity of the reception of the myth, particularly in music. This interest in Antigone can be traced back to as early as the beginning of the century. In 1809, the process begins when German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), who was responsible for the direction of the Weimar theatre, tries to reconstitute the poetic and musical

195 A similar 'happy ending' is also adopted by Pietro de Winter in his *Antigone*, first performed in Naples in 1791.

atmosphere of Sophocles' play, in collaboration with composer and music critic Friedrich Rochlitz. In spite of not having been a major success, this production represents one of the first 19th century attempts to reconstitute Antigone in the old style. Famous names in the music field, such as Franz Schubert, *Antigone und Oedip Lied D. 542* ("Antigone and Oedipus Lied D. 542") (by J. Mayrhofer), also included the myth among their creations.

In 1841, still in Germany, Sophocles' *Antigone* was famously performed, under the direction of Ludwig Tieck, and with music by Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847), at the service of Friedrich Wilhelm IV. 'Mendelssohn's *Antigone*' was premièred at Potsdam and repeated one week later in Berlin.¹⁹⁶ Tieck took the utmost care to set the stage and the costumes in accordance with the ancient theatre convention. As a matter of fact, the king appointed August Böckh, a classical philologist from the University of Berlin, as technical consultant for the performance so as to guarantee the 'archaeological' rigor of the new version. Mendelssohn composed a musical introduction and seven choir interventions, which became known as distinct works within his oeuvre. They were sung by two male choirs, in a strophe/antistrophe proportion based on the Greek model, to which some recitative passages were added. As regards the text, this opera followed the original play faithfully, using Johann Jacob Christian Donner's German translation (1839), which sought to emulate the original metric and rhythmic structure. Every one of these elements thus concurred to the same objective of historical faithfulness, aiming to associate the deep meaning of the text with its artistic stage expression. The echo of the popularity achieved by this performance, which, given its characteristics, became a historical landmark in terms of the reception of Sophocles' original, continued to be heard in the productions that followed.¹⁹⁷ This production had a very significant success, having been staged in Paris (Odeon,

196 See above, 401–2. Given its success, this production was performed again, between 1841 and 1845, in several European cities: Hamburg, Leipzig, Munich, London, Paris, Dublin, and it even crossed the Atlantic, with a performance being held in New York. On the production and the specificity of its musical score, see Geary (2012).

197 Van Steen (2008) 369–70 stresses the influence of this opera on the first manifestations of Greece's return to its drama tradition following a revivalist tendency, namely in the performances of Sophocles' play in 1867, with a translation by Alexandros Rangavis (1857), and, in 1896, in Giorgios Mistriotis' production. However, the Greek reception, in translations and performances based on this German version, was more extensive; see Tziovas (2014) 63–78.

1844), London (Covent Garden, 1845)¹⁹⁸ and Dublin (Royal Theatre, 1845),¹⁹⁹ Edinburgh, New York (Palmo's Opera House, 1845)²⁰⁰ and Athens (Herodes Atticus Theatre, 1867).²⁰¹

Towards the end of the 19th century, in 1893, the Comédie Française staged Sophocles' *Antigone* with musical score and choirs by French composer Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921), in an equivalent effort to the one developed in Germany; again, it was an 'ancient style' creation, based on Greek models, characterized by rhythmic simplicity, choirs in unison, and recitation upon a music background. The success of this work gives Saint-Saëns the epithet of a 'Neo-greco' musician.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the reception of the Antigone theme in opera was characterized by a Romantic approach,²⁰² enhancing the desperate passion between the young woman and Haemon. British author of books on political philosophy and natural science Houston Stewart Chamberlain's (1855–1927) libretto, *Der Tod der Antigone* ("Antigone's death", 1902), is an example of this Romantic trend, stressing the suicidal scene of the lovers whom Creon is unable to stop. In the meantime, numerous other choral compositions are dedicated to Antigone.²⁰³

German composer Carl Orff (1895–1982) created an *Antigone* which was first performed in 1949,²⁰⁴ conducted by Ferenc Fricsay, at the Felsenreitschule

198 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 317 acknowledge the strong influence of this performance on the future reception of the classics in the British landscape and they dedicate an extensive study to its importation by the United Kingdom, (2005) 319–49. This enthusiastic reception explains many poem versions inspired by it, such as Margaret Sandbach's poem "Antigone" in her collection *Aurora* (1850), and George Meredith's "Antigone", in his *Poems* (1851), besides many other marks and references disseminated in different texts of the time, including a burlesque version by Edward Blanchard, *Antigone Travestie* (1845). Other parodic versions followed throughout the 20th century and into the 21st: *Antígona-Humor* ("Antigone-Humour"), by Franklin Domínguez (Dominican Republic, 1968), *Antígona tiene un plan* ("Antigone has a plan"), by Javier Muñoz and Diego Yzola (Spain, 1998), and *Hillbilly Antigone*, by Rick Sims and Heidi Stillmann (Chicago, 2005).

199 Dillon/Wilmer (2005) 6 provide detailed information on this performance.

200 Hartigan (1995) 11–3 explains why this New York performance was important. It offered the New York audience, who were used to melodrama and certainly not familiar with Greek drama, a 'serious' play.

201 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 336.

202 Steiner (1995) 195–6.

203 See Bañuls/Crespo (2008) 586.

204 He had actually started to compose the piece some years before, probably in 1942, that is, under the Nazi regime. Later, in 1955, it was broadcast by the Italian radio; cf. Luzzatto (1956) 244.

Theatre, in Salzburg, Austria. He described it as “a musical setting” for the Sophoclean version. This opera was extremely relevant for his career; it was the first time that Orff had used a recitative technique which would be adopted in his future compositions and would significantly characterize his work: the recitation was combined with a Gregorian-like intonation of some passages to enhance the text’s ancient tone. As regards the orchestra, which displayed an enormous amount and variety of instruments, the predominant section is percussion, as is typical of this composer. The choir has an equivalent function to that of a chorus in tragedy: it is located on the stage, to perform comprehensive compositions that illustrate the major topics, following a strophe/antistrophe structure inspired by the original. In general terms, the plot also follows the Greek version quite closely; Creon is put in the spotlight as a paradigm of impious, despotic men, punished with ruin; the fearful Guard is a major comic condiment; and Antigone embodies a profound grief. The usual contrasts between figures are amplified by Orff by means of the opposition of voices, as well as through diction and singing.

As regards the importance of the chorus in *Antigone* rewritings, Domik Smolč’s Slovenian *Antigone* (1960) has been described as particularly ‘intriguing’;²⁰⁵ with Oedipus’ daughter absent from the stage, her grief and the moral and political meaning of her experience are represented through the mediation of the chorus and other characters. A synthesis of the major musical versions in the second half of the 20th century must include the following elements:²⁰⁶ in Bulgaria, in 1963, with the impact of World War II still being felt, Lyubomir Pipkov (born 1904) presents his opera titled *Antigone* ‘43. Some years later (1967), in the USA, William Russo’s (1928–2003) operatic version, with libretto by A. A. Hoge (Chicago) is performed. In 1971, British composer and writer Reginald S. Brindle (1917–2003) presents his chamber opera *Death of Antigone* in Oxford, England. Inspired by Anouilh, Hungarian composer József Söprönyi (born 1930) produces an opera in three acts, *Antigone*, while in Holland Ton de Leeuw (1926–1996) composes a 3-part musical drama (1991), followed by Dinos Constantinides (Greece/USA, born 1929)’s opera on the same theme, with libretto by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald.²⁰⁷

Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis (born 1925) has also dedicated an opera, *Antigone*—to Oedipus’ daughter, a lyrical tragedy in two acts, as he defined it. It is the third piece in a trilogy that includes also *Medea* and *Elektra* (1999).

205 Steiner (1995) 212.

206 Brown (2004) 307–9.

207 Bañuls/Crespo (2008) 586–7 add yet other references to this extensive information.

An intertextual articulation with Euripides' *Phoenician Women* is immediately perceptible in the list of characters, which includes Eteocles and Polynices, besides Oedipus and Jocasta, but other plays about the same Theban myth are also present in the libretto, authored by Theodorakis himself. Two particular topics have been underlined as relevant:²⁰⁸ the visibility of the fratricidal war and the final duet sung by Antigone and Haemon's ghost by the heroine's tomb. Despite the fact that they are separated by death, they still celebrate the invincible power of love.

It is interesting to associate these musical versions with those resulting from the success of theatre productions. This is the case with María Zambrano's *La tumba de Antígona* ("Antigone's tomb"), which inspired a piece with the same title by Spanish composer Jesús Torres (born 1965), very successfully premièred in Madrid in 2004, executed by the Spanish National Orchestra, conducted by maestro Josep Pons. The musical score includes the same number of scenes as the play and seeks to express the protagonist's sentiments through music.²⁰⁹

In the 21st century, *Antigone* re-emerges in Poland (2001) in an opera by Zbigniew Rudzinski (born 1954), titled *Antygona*, and in Ireland, *Antigone* (2003), directed by Conall Morrison.²¹⁰ In 2008, within the same music genre, Sophocles' play was adapted to a rock opera, titled *Antigona*, in Prague (Czech Republic) with music by Milan Steigerwald and text by Pavla Forest.

In 2012, Mikis Theodorakis published an opera inspired by Sophocles' *Antigone* which he titled *Eros anikate machan* ("Love invincible in battle"), the same name as an aria sung by Antigone.

Dance

The first ballet dedicated to Antigone is identified²¹¹ as the one choreographed in 1772 by French composer and violinist Jean-Marie Leclair (1697–1764), for the performance of Giuseppe Maria Orlandini's opera, in Turin (Italy). Other 18th and 19th century choreographies are, for example, Italian Pietro Gugliantini (1752), Gaetano Goia (1790), and Giovanni Galzerani's (1825).

American dancer Isadora Duncan (1877–1927) has been termed²¹² 'the Founding Mother of Greek Dance', identifying the origin of a tradition followed by Ruby Ginner, herself a reference in the English dance landscape between

208 Brown (2004) 298.

209 Camacho Rojo (2012) 24–5.

210 Bañuls/Crespo (2008) 587.

211 Bañuls/Crespo (2008) 589.

212 Macintosh (2010) 199.

the Wars. Her performance as a chorus member, in British teacher of voice and dramatic diction Elsie Fogerty's *Antigone* (1904), has been noticed.

In 1959, Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis wrote the music for a ballet titled *Antigone*, choreographed by John Cranko and premièred in Covent Garden, featuring dancers M. Fonteyn and R. Nurejew. This was the culmination of Theodorakis' composition work in Paris, where he lived between 1954 and 1959, working on such diversified genres as chamber music, ballet, and symphony. This work of his participated in the Avignon festival, in 1972, with a choreography by Micha Van Hoecke. Rallou Manou (1962) choreographed Theodorakis' *The dead brother's song* (1960), described as a combination of "ancient Greek tragedy, the myths and symbols of modern Greek history and the structural elements of folk and popular songs."²¹³

Some years later, in France, the Ballets Modernes de Paris, directed by Françoise and Dominique Dupuy, present *Antigone*, a tragic choreography, in the Baux festival (1966). A noteworthy fact is the absence of Creon in this piece.²¹⁴

The reception of Antigone's story in dance is to be found in different continents. Cuba may be an example:²¹⁵ "in the very original and intelligent piece by the Cuban dance group Danza Abierta, directed by Marianela Boan with music by David Byrne, the whole Antigone motif is synthesized in the desperate dance of the protagonist with her brother's dead body until she falls from exhaustion and understands the uselessness of her effort. Allusions to the pressing Cuban reality become evident in this case: the confrontation between brothers—invaders and invaded—and a nation divided by a straight of a mere sixty miles." Again the myth is adapted to a concrete reality. The Antigone motif has been included in the repertoire of reference dance companies such as the Bolshoi Ballet, from Moscow, with a choreography by Serguei Bobrov (1998), a production with an international dissemination, or the Rebecca Davis Dance Company's version (2006), with music by Russian composer Timofey Buzina.

On Stage and Screen

On Stage

In 20th century France, rewritings in dramatic form sought to break away from the 'realist' literary taste that had been dominant in the previous century,

²¹³ Macintosh (2010) 275.

²¹⁴ Fraisse (1974) 157.

²¹⁵ Pianacci (2008) 10.

as the World War I experience produced a change of mentalities. In line with

this strong feeling of change, a whole new generation of intellectuals committed themselves to rebellion and to the quest for a 'new absolute'.²¹⁶ The interaction of different artists, with different cultures and artistic projects although sharing the same desire for innovation—like Picasso, the Spanish painter, or, in music, the French Eric Satie and Darius Milhaud, the Swiss Arthur Honneger and the Russian Igor Stravinsky—, gave this whole movement its own specific, multifaceted consistency; seeking an essential nihilism and producing a minimalist aesthetics were two of the basic rules underlying this new artistic project.²¹⁷ Though under the influence of all these innovative interpretive patterns, when it comes to *Antigone*, the usual reading perspectives—political, feminist, Christian—are somehow present in the multiple French drama rewritings of this period.

In line with this nonconformist and novelty-seeking frame of mind, the French playwright Jean Cocteau (1889–1963) dedicated a production (Théâtre de l'Atelier, Paris, 1922) to the *Antigone* myth. Cocteau counted on the collaboration of Pablo Picasso, who created the scenery, Arthur Honneger, as musicologist, and Coco Chanel, who was responsible for designing the costumes.²¹⁸ The whole project followed the same iconoclastic approach to the reception of the Classics, where the text—as 'translation' / 'adaptation'—is the first element to undergo the effect of minimalist 'simplification'. Starting with the chorus, an element which all rewritings tend to transform, Cocteau reduces it to a single voice, and the concepts that Sophocles expounds in his lyrical chants become but brief, narrative sentences; the dialogues between the characters are similarly shortened, mentioning only the bare essentials, so as to concentrate the power of the action, making it more agile, with the traditional

216 The new understanding of art, based on the depreciation of traditional formulae and an intensive quest for unsuspected invention, was 'theoretically' sustained by the members of *Littérature* ("Literature"), a journal founded in 1922 by French writer and poet André Breton.

217 That is what Jean Cocteau writes (1977) 251 regarding his methodology, *qui consiste à couper et retendre la peau des vieux chefs d'oeuvre, à les remettre au rythme nouveau de nos capitales* ("that consists in cutting and tightening the old masterpieces' skin, and accommodating them to the new pace of our capital cities.").

218 Cocteau (1948). The fact that names like Picasso, Honneger and Chanel were involved in this production shows Cocteau's commitment to the 'sensorial' aspects of the performance, color, movement, sound. Fraisse (1974) 16 provides information on some of the "disconcerting" details of this staging.

speeches of each of the characters being somewhat restricted.²¹⁹ Overall, the message conveyed by Cocteau's *Antigone* can be described as independent: his heroine is neither a martyr nor a symbol of political contestation.²²⁰

Cocteau does send to Hades a free, virgin, famous Antigone as opposed to the routinized, formalizing weight of past performances and of official re-readings and appropriations; she is nonetheless an Antigone imprisoned in her role as Oedipus' daughter, a condition that determines her route as fate, perhaps regulated by a first shadow of the 'machine of the gods'.

Notwithstanding the audience's reserved reception of this production, as reported by the press of the time, the truth is that Cocteau's *Antigone* did inaugurate a time of significant enthusiasm for classical themes, which, as a whole, did merit considerable international acknowledgement.

One of the most famous productions dedicated to Oedipus' daughter did in fact emerge from this movement: French playwright Jean Anouilh's (1910–1987) *Antigone* (1942),²²¹ included in what the author called *Nouvelles Pièces Noires* ("New black pieces"). The period was marked by World War II, and the Nazi occupation of France was in full swing. Although the play was not specifically meant to be a piece of political protest, it certainly did convey a message of repudiation concerning the German occupation.²²² However, its predominant note was the transformation of a Greek tragedy into a human drama adjusted to a contemporary context. In order to ensure the adaptation of the Sophoclean model to the expectations of the new audience while making them aware of the strategies put in place, Anouilh uses the Prologue—which is one of the characters in the play—and the chorus. In the opening scene, not only

219 This performance featured some noted actors and actresses of the time: Charles Dullin (Creon), Antonin Artaud (Tiresias) and Genica Atanasiou (Antigone).

220 Fialho (in press).

221 Anouilh (1998). This play was premièred in Paris, in 1944, at Théâtre de l'Atelier, under the direction of André Barsacq. Urdician (2015) 288 is quite categorical in her acknowledgement of the continued popularity of this play in 21st century France, where it is followed only by Brecht's and Brecht's versions. Mee/Foley (2011) 43 also acknowledge Anouilh and Brecht's extremely important influence on the reception of the motif.

222 That was at least how it was read at the time by the critics, who identified Creon with the image of Pierre Laval, a collaborationist of the German occupation, while associating Antigone with the resistance (see García Sola (2009) 256–7, Guérin (2010) 101).

is the Prologue given the traditional task of conveying the usual information about the work to follow and introducing the characters, but these gain a physical presence and a well-defined personality which, despite remaining conventional, grant them some specific behaviors that signal their connection with their surrounding world (they do needlework, play cards, engage in conversation). Later, the author's voice is heard again, now through a parabasis-type intervention of the chorus, at a crucial moment just before the *agon* ("discussion") between Antigone and Creon takes place. The reflection focuses on the nature of the text itself, which must be understood as a tragedy, despite the fact that it incorporates some elements of bourgeois drama. It is a question of converting simple everyday gestures into projections of a paradigmatic and universal grandeur. In order to achieve this, it suffices to confront these innocuous human contributions with higher powers, which can be called the 'gods', or 'fate'. After that encounter is set, the action develops relentlessly, leading frailty to fatal destruction, with events being controlled by what, borrowing from Cocteau, we may term *la machine infernale* ("the infernal machine").

After presenting a first image of daily life, Anouilh gradually sets up a web of human relationships: the disputes between the two sisters, Antigone and Ismene, now include amorous rivalry, with both girls competing for Haemon's attention; in his turn, Haemon is given more space to experience romantic feelings and frustrations, as well as the opportunity to bid farewell to the rebel young woman as he sees all of his marriage plans being destroyed; beside Antigone, her aunt Eurydice, her old Nurse, and a little dog follow her life path since childhood and help break her traditional loneliness; even Creon ceases to be—as in Hegel—the strict tyrant, now taking on the role of a tranquil man to whom power came by chance, and who would much rather be allowed to pass his time busy with his aristocrat's collections and hobbies; killing Antigone is a decision he wishes to postpone at all costs; and when he makes the decision, he does it under the pressure of everyone around him as well as out of a sense of duty. And last, more than the opponent of power on behalf of an ideal, Antigone is above all the image of an inner rebelliousness which prevents her from saying the word 'yes'; from life, she expects 'everything' and 'now', peremptorily, absolutely—that is, she expects the impossible. Incompatible with life, this impossibility is exactly what frustrates her. 'Anarchy' is a word that applies to her gesture of rupture, underscoring her twin transgressions: the one interfering with Creon's edict and the one that confronts her with the rules imposed on her as a woman. This play marked a major success in Anouilh's career, and his Antigone, the voice of disobedience or of non-conformance to authoritarian systems, had a significant influence on

other rewritings, everywhere in Europe.²²³ That is why the years 1978 to 1979 were said to have produced true “Antigone epidemics”.²²⁴

The scenic potentialities of *La Antígona Furiosa* (“Furious Antigone”) by Argentine playwright Griselda Gambaro²²⁵ (born 1928) deserve some attention. Based on an analepsis, this play approaches the Antigone theme from a rather innovative angle (1989):²²⁶ after Antigone is presented as someone who killed herself by hanging, like in Sophocles’ original play, Gambaro brings her back to life and lets her to speak of, and assess her life path, which had ended with suicide. This is, therefore, an out-of-time Antigone. The temporal gap provides a contrast between her and the other characters in the play: the Coryphaeus (who repeats Creon, Polynices, Haemon and the Sophoclean Chorus’ words) and Antinous (a kind of distanced observer of everything that goes on).²²⁷ But she is nonetheless also the spokesperson for a specific Argentinian reality, which, though now past and unknown to her interlocutors, must be kept alive. The contrasts between the characters are not just the ones mentioned. Discourse is also a divisive element in this version: while Oedipus’ daughter has a higher register with tragic overtones, the speeches of the Corypheus and Antinous have parodic resonances, perhaps a critical subversion of a certain solemn style, like Sophocles’. This discourse of theirs evinces both their lack of understanding, as an ‘audience’, of Antigone’s revelations and the indifference to a massive injustice, which the society that they represent shows. To these contrasts in time and discourse there can be added scenery contrasts. Antinous and the Corypheus—according to the stage directions—move in a

223 Also in Portugal, after a first performance in Lisbon in 1946, by Rideau de Paris, at Teatro da Trindade (“Theatre of Trindade”), Anouilh’s play was repeatedly performed by Portuguese companies in the 60s and 70s, a fact with major impacts on the reception of the play in this country (see above, 426–7). See Silva (1998) 47–53.

224 Steiner (1995) 134.

225 Gambaro (2001). See above, 419.

226 On this version, see Zecchin de Fasano (2009) 703–9. The *contaminatio* becomes quite evident in this production by Gambaro, who combines a number of elements from Aeschylus’ *Seven Against Thebes*, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Camus’ *La Peste* (“The Plague”), and Anouilh’s *Antigone* with the Sophoclean original.

227 This new Antinous does not preserve many of the elements that belonged to his ancient counterparts: one of Penelope’s suitors, in the *Odyssey*—and emperor Adrianus’ lover; Bañuls/Crespo (2008) 480 nonetheless believe that the Puerto Rican Antinous shares with those figures his deceitfulness and his complicity with power. He is a shadow-partner of the Coryphaeus; he takes no initiatives, although his comments, expressed in typical Puerto Rican language, are the most caustic and provide a strong contribution to the parodic effect of the text.

bar environment and they are dressed in normal, daily clothes, while Antigone is wrapped in the pale colors of a tunic, simultaneously a shroud and the wedding dress of a bride of Hades. The two common men can only see madness in the transcendent image of this woman, interpreting her pain and rebelliousness as symptoms of some mental disorder. Taking the form of the Corypheus and emasculated in his autonomy as a character, Creon becomes a symbol of the imprisonment and the loneliness that come with power.²²⁸ In this version, in contrast with the frailty of her opponent, Antigone proves to be stronger, equipped, as she is, with the entire load of her memories concerning the main interlocutors in her life, Ismene, Polynices, and the fratricidal duel that drastically reduced her family. One of the most obvious inflections in her words is the erotic, both in her relationship with her brother and in the feelings that her 'nuptial cave' awakens in her.²²⁹ After all, it is love that drives her in her resolute confrontation with Creon, an example that "hate is in command."²³⁰ With her ancestral attitude, Antigone can also be read—in the eyes of Argentine writer Gambaro—as one of the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo²³¹ whom the establishment considered to be 'madwomen' and who paid with their life for their disobedience in standing up for the dead. In conclusion,²³² "the central question of all these productions is: will Argentina continue to sacrifice its women and exclude others and promulgate internal violence and terror in order to build a modern nation?"

Classical tradition also found fertile ground in the existing context of political violence in South Africa, before the end of apartheid. As regards the myth

228 Zecchin de Fasano (2009) 708 aptly remarks that: "La expresión de la realidad se compone con la imagen del poder como una cáscara superficial, fuera de la carcassa el poder no existe" ("the expression of reality is composed by way of an image of power as a superficial shell, outside of that carcass power does not exist"), meaning the scenic representation of Creon—as a carcass—in the play.

229 In some aspects of these motifs, expressed in monologue form by someone who, when facing death, reflects on her life, Gambaro's Antigone bears a model-like resemblance to that of the Portuguese author Eduarda Dionísio, in *Antes que a noite venha* ("Before the night comes"; see above, 430).

230 Gambaro (2001) 217.

231 A movement organised by Argentine mothers against the military regime that governed the country between 1976 and 1983—as well as against the amnesty laws that pardoned the crimes committed by the same regime—to try and learn what had happened to their children who had been abducted (thus disappeared) by the repressive military dictatorship. The Plaza de Mayo, right in front of the government palace (Casa Rosada, "Pink House"), in the centre of Buenos Aires, was chosen as the venue for their protest demonstrations.

232 Fradinger, *apud* Mee/Foley (2011) 25.

of *Antigone*, it is present in an interesting and emblematic treatment of the local social situation by initiative of two black actors—John Kani and Winston Ntshona²³³—in association with Athol Fugard (born 1932), a white playwright and actor, who authored a rewrite of the play with the title *The Island* (1973). Since it had to be clandestine, the existence of a text was delayed until the final production. This draft-text had to be assembled, like a construction game, from different models (Sophocles and Anouilh) combined with the input of a number of performances both in theatres and prisons in South Africa, which led to the composition of *The Island* as the final outcome of a work-in-process. *The Island* thus portrays the creation of an *Antigone*, that is, the very creative process it emerges from.²³⁴ However, in its structure, the performance itself is set in a closed space, framing a discussion on the performance conditions in prison and the adequate allocation of roles between the two actors. This play became quite an effective weapon in the fight against the dominant racist ideology and its performances were seen as a claim for the release of political prisoners.²³⁵

233 The two Black actors, who had themselves been victims of the apartheid, developed a very personal affinity with the meaning of their roles. They even share their names with their respective characters, John and Winston.

234 The mere association of a white actor with two other black actors in itself defies the rules of apartheid and is fraught with political meaning. Goff/Simpson (2007) 277–8 describe the circumstances in which this play was composed, explaining how *Antigone* functioned as a stimulating element in all of them. To start with, Norman, the actor, was imprisoned in Ntshinga Robben Island (1965) on the eve of the première of a version of Sophocles' original (by the company 'the Serpent Players'), in which he played Haemon's part. As a consequence, the actor decided to organize a more or less improvised performance of the play. After he was released from Ntshinga's prison, Norman performed it again, adding to the Sophoclean tradition his experience in Robben Island and the description of that prison that he was able to disclose. And even before Fugard could finally write *The Island*, inspired by these two sources, Sophocles' *Antigone* was performed anew at Robben Island, with Nelson Mandela playing the part of Creon (1970).

235 On other performances of this play, see Hardwick (2004) 238–9. It may be interesting to look at Peter Brook's words, included in the program of the performance at the National Theatre, London, in 2000 (*apud* Goff/Simpson (2007) 278), who identify the ritualistic tone emphasized by the movement on stage: "In 1974, in London, a play from South Africa burst into the Royal Court Theatre like a bomb. On an empty stage, for fifteen minutes, the only sound heard was that made by the repetitive movements of two men—two young black actors, moving from one side of the stage to the other in a mime of incredible precision: digging, filling wheelbarrows, pushing them, emptying them, digging, filling each of them again. Great drops of sweat poured from the two men. Each muscle of their bodies,

In 21st century France, in an extensive minimalist poem, the playwright Eugène Durif (born 1950) gives a voice to Antigone that enables her to review her life path, the distorted origin of a child of incest, and to try to understand each of her own gestures and motivations. This current-of-consciousness monologue finds its roots in a tradition that goes back to María Zambrano. The role of this Antigone is to question men-made laws, that is, power; these laws can be unfair and unacceptable and, for that reason, they tend to divide humanity rather than promote solidarity. Dramatizing the poem on stage, Flasquaut's performance explores the mechanization of gestures and, most particularly, music and singing, besides playing with the alternation between words and silence. The scene becomes agonistic through light and shadow effects; in a central position, two funerary steles, beside which two ghost warriors simulate the fratricidal fight with well-planned movements; on the right, the banquet of power representatives, presided over by an inebriated Creon, thus definitely devoid of sensibility or of consciousness; and on the left, although the position of their heads suggest contrasting attitudes of resistance or submission, the two sisters express solidarity, in utter contrast with the conflict that divides the brothers. The key message, sent from a new millennium that has not lost the memory of all the conflicts it has inherited, seems to include principally an appeal for reconciliation, a difficult reconciliation which not even death can secure.

In 2013, French writer and scenographer Claude Brozzoni (born 1956) staged *Antigone 466–64*, combining text by Sophocles with other, autobiographical, excerpts from Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*.²³⁶ Brozzoni's discovery of theatre did not happen through a reading process but rather via his deep contact with his family and with their strong religious tradition. Rooted in that life experience, his theatre blends workers and peasants' songs with the presence of earthly forces that stem from a deep understanding of nature. Designed as an international project, this *Antigone* is the result of a collaboration between the Brozzoni Company and Burkinese Paul Zoungrana's Arts in Intersection, and it was première in Burkina Faso with African actors. This text, which incorporates some autobiographical passages from the African leader and combines Antiquity with contemporariness, deals with resistance vis-à-vis despotic power. Antigone and Mandela are connected as two voices which, although separated in time, are raised for a common cause, that

every fibre of their being showed a complete, a crushing reality that they absolutely had to express. For them, that empty space was the quarry on Robben Island."

236 Back in the 1960s, Nelson Mandela had played the role of Creon in a performance of Sophocles' *Antigone* at Robben Island (see above, 460 n. 234); see Urdician (in press).

of freedom, in confrontation with ‘inhuman laws’ such as, in the contemporary African context, racism. Number 466–64,²³⁷ which identified Mandela in prison and is added to the name of the Theban heroine, is a clear mark of the harmony between the two figures, which are performed by the same actor (Paul Zoungrana himself). The setting is the prison yard, a stripped space where figures in shackles move behind a net that marks their isolation. Also in this case, African music sounds help re-contextualise the theme.

Finally, in 21st century-Irish drama, too, the myth of Antigone, adapted to the social and political conflicts that plagued the country, deserved some attention. Mention should be made of the Nobel prize poet Seamus Heaney (1939–2013), for his translation / adaptation titled *The burial at Thebes. A version of Sophocles’ Antigone* (2004), produced for the commemorations of the centenary of Abbey Theatre, in Dublin.²³⁸ Heaney’s version merged the ancient myth with the invasion of Iraq on the initiative of George W. Bush, drawing a parallel between the U.S. president and the figure of Creon. However, a local event—the death of a man on hunger strike in protest against the British rule in Northern Ireland, and his parents’ struggle to retrieve his body (1981)²³⁹—also inspired Heaney’s ‘adaptation’. Characters like the Guard were amplified and given a clearly Irish accent, using a more popular language when the transgression is acknowledged and a more poetic diction when the transgressor is proudly presented. Heaney himself evaluates the metrified language of the original and reflects on the register and the cadence that best fit each character, clearly formulating his intention of producing a ‘free’ translation, in a style that appeals to his contemporary audience, albeit doing justice to the fascination exerted by the original rhythm.²⁴⁰ A visually relevant element in the performance has been stressed:²⁴¹ the apparition of Antigone in a bridal gown, enhancing the idea of her nuptials with Hades and of the tragic potential of what would primarily be deemed a festive image.²⁴²

237 I.e., it identifies inmate number 466 in the year 1964.

238 Some years later (2008), this translation / adaptation served as a libretto for an opera, with a musical score by Dominique Le Gendre, which was premièred at the Globe Theatre, London.

239 Hardwick (in press).

240 Dillon/Wilmer (2005) 169–76.

241 Dillon/Wilmer (2005) XIX.

242 In Ireland, the myth was also adapted by Conall Morrison, in his *Antigone* (2003); see above, 453; and by Owen McCafferty, who wrote another *Antigone* (2008), this one focusing on Creon from a Hegelian perspective, where the king is portrayed as a pragmatic—even if impotent—executor of power rather than as a tyrant.

On Screen

Naturally, the Antigone theme has also been appropriated by cinema, with different productions ranging from new readings of the Sophoclean plot to updated 'metaphorical' versions, where issues that belong to other epochs resonate with the usual identifying traits of Oedipus' daughter.

In the early 20th century, silent movies show their interest in Greek tragedy, with Antigone being among the most suggestive themes. "Between 1908 and 1913 no less than eight film recordings of stage productions of Oedipus Rex, Antigone and Lysistrata were made in France, Italy and Germany."²⁴³ Mario Casserini's *Antigone* (1911) and Jacques Baroncelli's *La nouvelle Antigone* ("The new Antigone") are two relevant examples.

In the aftermath of World War II,²⁴⁴ being aware of the importance of classical tradition for the formation of its modern identity, Greece itself chose to express its past in cinema. The first film adaptation of a Greek tragedy dates back to 1961 and was titled *Antigone*;²⁴⁵ directed by Yorgos Tzavellas, it featured Irene Papas and Manos Katrakis in the roles of Antigone and Creon, respectively; this film was exhibited during the 11th edition of the Berlin International Film Festival. Technically, this production focused on the monumentality of the set, more specifically the city of Thebes and the palace; costumes and accessories were inspired by classical architecture and iconography. As has been noted:²⁴⁶ "Tzavellas is at pains to restore an 'authentic' context for his Antigone, a context shaped by cultural practices which 'automatically' imply continuity with the past." As regards the story, although it emulates the structure of the tragedy, the end is quite different, with Creon being dethroned and exiled. Some conventional theatrical effects were necessarily adapted to the language of cinema. That happened, for example, with the chorus intervention, which was replaced by poems read in a voice-over while the screen shows close-ups of the characters or images of traditional Thebes, the city of the seven doors.

In the year 1969, in Italy, Antigone was the theme of *I Cannibali*²⁴⁷ ("The cannibals"), a production by Liliana Cavani. It portrayed a revolutionary

²⁴³ Michelakis (2001) 242.

²⁴⁴ Bañuls/Crespo (2008) 594 also mention the interest in the theme on the part of many television networks.

²⁴⁵ Not far from this date, Luoïs-Georges Carrier directed an *Antigone* (1962) also based on Sophocles, while some years later (1974) Gerald Freedman followed Anouilh's version in another production.

²⁴⁶ Michelakis (2001) 243.

²⁴⁷ This production is extensively commented by MacKinnon (1986) 105–11.

movement started in a city—the film is set in Milan—where those in power decide to leave the bodies of the murdered insurgents without burial. This is the context for the eternal confrontation between a pious Antigone—determined to bury not only her brother's body but also all the bodies that flood the city—and the cruelty of those who exercise power. The rebel young woman is killed by the bullets shot by the government presided by her own father, and her determination inspires another citizen to carry on her work against the injustices of the state. Despite her example, citizens in general seem indifferent to the scandal of the killings and are submissive to despotism, in the hope that it will provide security. In contemporary terms, this Antigone is a defender of human rights against the arbitrariness of power, a symbol of female determination which men are unable to emulate.

In France, *Aminata's* director (1972), Claude Vermorel, gives the Theban action a general mark of exoticism by setting it in Africa, on the margins of the Niger river.

With the end of the century, other social and war conflicts kept Antigone under the spotlight. *Avant-garde* adaptations of Sophocles include *Antigone: Rites for the Dead*, by American author/filmmaker Amy Greenfield (1990), which combines different motifs from *Antigone* and *Oedipus at Colonus*. A central element in this production has been stressed:²⁴⁸ "(...) a feminist reading of the myth of Antigone based on experimental rock music and 'film dance,'" a film adaptation of a strong element of drama. The setting is also discontinuous with the Antigone tradition—New Hampshire forests, a gravel on Long Island, which is referred to as a 'desert', and which would symbolize Oedipus and Antigone's sanctuary, and the New York Empire State Plaza, as Creon's palace²⁴⁹—an American framework for the production, setting and values of this Antigone. The contrasts between the different settings serve as a background to the character oppositions: nature suggests Antigone's freedom, and the urban setting symbolizes Creon's oppression, which is appropriate in a play that deals with the urbanistic aggression perpetrated by power in modern cities.

248 Michelakis (2001) 249.

249 Michelakis' comment (2001) 251 on this is quite interesting: "Shot in isolation, the Empire State Plaza—all concrete, glass and iron—is a negative image of modernity, an image of sterility and of urban dystopia. Shot in isolation, the Empire State Plaza features as a modernist space which belongs nowhere: without context, without links and without history, it is rooted nowhere and in this respect it is inhumane. It is a site of totalitarianism and oppression that expresses visually the personality and ideology of a tyrant."

In 1992, a new version of *Antigone*, based on Brecht's play and combined with passages from Sophocles translated by Hölderlin,²⁵⁰ was produced in Germany. It was directed by Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, connoted with the so-called New German Cinema.²⁵¹ The static reproduction of the action, in a Mediterranean setting, is suggestive of a strong theatrical influence. Being interested in both content and form, Straub and Huillet explored the actors' diction, maximizing Hölderlin's poetical translation and its rhythm and pause play, where form serves the theme's dialectics.

In 1998, Greek film director Nikos Koundouros (born 1926) produced a film adaptation of the play with the title *The Photographers*.²⁵² The usual civil war context is set in an imaginary Islamic country, where the local fighters are confronted with western reporters, in a tension between those two parts of the world and their respective ideologies, embodied in a male world thirsty for power and visibility. This male element is set in a new contrast with female resistance, taking the form of two choruses: the reporters, who speak via the power of their cameras when capturing the spectacle of death, and the women's, taking refuge in silent protest. In this production, *Antigone* has a double personality, embodied in the same actress: on the one hand, she plays her usual role of one who buries her brother against the orders of the local powers; on the other, she is a reporter who sympathizes with her Islamic double; the burial is a leitmotif that awakens the eternal conflict, now adapted to a new context: between female 'piety' and the violence of men in power and its consumption by both the journalists and the audience.

In the 21st century (2006), the famous Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar (born 1949) directed *Volver* ("Coming back"), based on a story which has in common with Sophocles' *Antigone* a dual set of laws, which, in this case, consists of men's law and women's law. It deals with an unsolved murder of two men and a woman who break the rules and disrespect the 'female' values in the

250 This was explicitly described in the film's title: *Die Antigone des Sophokles nach der hölderlinischen Übertragung für die Bühne bearbeitet von Brecht* ("The Antigone of Sophocles after Hölderlin's Translation Adapted for the Stage by Brecht").

251 Michelakis (2004) 213 mentions the drama version, performed in Berlin in 1991, as a preparation for the film, and, in itself, also very timely: it was a time of German reunification and the Gulf War. And he concludes: "Straub dedicated it to hundred thousand—or more, we don't even know—Iraqi dead that we have murdered." On the strategies used by the two directors in the movie, see Michelakis (2013) 84–90.

252 See Michelakis (2004) 210–1. Michelakis provides information on the previous theatre production by Koundouros (1994), *A cry for peace*, set in the border between Greece and the former Republic of Yugoslavia at the time of the Balkans war.

'city'; they had committed incest and she had been unfaithful to her husband by having an affair with the husband of her best friend. A group of women is responsible for planning the crime and keeping its secrecy, in a law-defying complicity. To the law of the city they oppose another, moral, law represented by the women, which men, upholding a patriarchal, sexist law, fail to understand, and antagonize. The impunity of the female divergence, which is a kind of victory of matriarchal laws, is above discussion, for it represents an ancient, unwritten law. The title of the film, *Volver* ("Coming back"), no doubts mirrors the archaic source that inspires Almodôvar, despite the burlesque tone he chooses for his production.

As a part of Queer Lisboa 19, Festival de Cinema Queer (Lisbon Queer Film Festival), the SillySeason collective²⁵³ produced a short film, *Antígona* (2015), based on Sophocles' original. Centred on the personification of the figure of Polynices, the traditional *agon* ("dispute") is materialized in two short films, one of them focused on Antigone and the other on Creon. As a strategy, the starting point is a work developed on the basis of iconic paintings—portraits displaying death, namely the death of individuals who gave their lives for political, religious or artistic ideals. The following comment could be read on their advertising site:²⁵⁴ "É o espectador quem vai decidir o seu grande destino (de Polinices), entre a sepultura e o abandono, entrando livremente no espaço expositivo e tendo o grande poder de decisão, tornando esta uma obra interativa e entusiasmante" ("The spectator is the one who is going to choose his [Polynice's] great destiny, between the grave and forlornness, by freely entering the exhibition space and exerting the decision power, making this an interactive and exciting work.")

Portuguese cinema has also dedicated an interesting version to Antigone, directed by João Canijo (born 1957),²⁵⁵ *Ganhar a Vida* ("Get a life", 2001). Although produced in the year 2000, Canijo's theme goes back to Portuguese reality in the mid-20th century, when Salazar's dictatorship caused a massive exodus of the population to central and northern European countries, notably

253 SillySeason is a DNA (District of New Art)-associated structure, with headquarters in Lisbon, which has been developing art productions in the areas of drama, performance, and video.

254 magneticamagazine.com/sillyseason-apresentam-antigona/.

255 João Canijo has dedicated several of his film productions to classical themes: to Electra, *Filha da Mãe* ("Lovely Child", 1990), to Iphigenia, *Noite Escura* ("In the Darkness of the Night", 2004) and *Mal Nascida* ("Misbegotten", 2007), inspired by *Oresteia*.

France. Like Antigone, Canijo's protagonist, Cidália, strongly resists authority, claiming for dignity and the rights of dislocated minorities when her oldest son becomes involved in a fight and is killed, probably by the police. The police's denial of their responsibility and the uncomfortableness caused by Cidália's protest among the Portuguese immigrant community—who wish to avoid conflicts with the French—leave her in utter isolation. Abandoned by her husband and having fallen in love with a man who is eventually identified as her son's murderer, Cidália is left with only one path to salvation: suicide.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Antigone*

Given the widespread spectrum of truly multiform versions and interpretations inspired to the myth of Antigone throughout the centuries, the bibliography on the different issues it has raised becomes inevitably uncontrollable. Here too, a strict selection is thus necessary.

Notwithstanding the fact that the different rewritings, revisions, and reinterpretations of the motif have followed a virtually uninterrupted path for centuries, we must acknowledge that the growing interest in reception studies in the last decades has yielded an increasingly comprehensive production of a high-quality, very specific bibliography. Some of the volumes published focus on the reception of myths in general, with Antigone always visibly present, for example: Morán/Montiel (1998); Hall/Macintosh/Wrigley (2004); Bañuls/De Martino/Morenilla (2006); López/Pociña (2009); Foley (2012); López *et alii* (2012); Boshier *et alii* (2015).

However, studies specifically dedicated to Antigone and even to her re-emergence in unexpected geographical contexts are becoming more common. With some years having now gone by since the two reference studies were published—Fraisie (1974); Steiner (1984)—, a diachronic perspective on the reception of Antigone in its different modalities constitutes the core of important recent studies such as Bañuls/Crespo (2008); Belardinelli/Greco (2010); Duroux/Urdician (2010); Fornaro (2010); Mee/Foley (2011). Other relevant studies, like Morais (2001); Hall/Macintosh (2005) concern different European countries; and an innovative volume, dedicated to the Portuguese reception and coordinated by Hardwick *et alii*, is being prepared. The Iberoamerican world has achieved a great visibility in this respect, as described in Bañuls *et alii* (1999); Pianacci (2008); López Férez (2012). Studies on the same phenomenon in African countries are presented by Goff/Simpson (2007) and Hardwick/Gillespie (2007).

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Electra

P.J. Finglass

The start of Sophocles' Electra sees the return of Orestes to his native Mycenae, accompanied by his faithful slave, the Paedagogus. Years before, Orestes' mother, Clytemnestra, together with her lover, Aegisthus, had killed his father, Agamemnon, on his return from the Trojan War; the young Orestes was spirited away to friends in Phocis by his elder sister, Electra. Now he has returned, ordered by Apollo to avenge by stealth his father's murder. He declares that he and the Paedagogus will now make offerings at his father's tomb; after that, the Paedagogus will come back to the house and announce that Orestes had been killed at the Pythian Games at Delphi. Suddenly, the pair hear a cry off-stage: it is Electra, Orestes' sister. They leave before she can see them.

Electra comes on stage and sings a lament for her father. The chorus, a group of young local women, arrive and join in her song; they seek to dissuade her from her perpetual mourning, but Agamemnon's unavenged murder makes her unwilling to stop. After the song Electra justifies herself to the chorus, describing her misfortunes. Then her sister, Chrysothemis, arrives; she has made her accommodation with the new rulers, and tells her sister that, if she fails to stop her laments, Aegisthus and Clytemnestra will imprison her underground. After failing to persuade her sister, Chrysothemis announces that Clytemnestra has sent her to make offerings at Agamemnon's tomb after having had a dream. The details of that dream, in which Agamemnon returned to his house to plant his sceptre in the hearth, causing a plant to sprout and cover the whole land of Mycenae, encourage Electra, who persuades Chrysothemis to abandon Clytemnestra's gifts, and instead to make offerings from the sisters to their father.

A song from the chorus focuses on the prospect of Justice returning to the house to take vengeance on Agamemnon's killers. Yet it ends with ominous tones, referring to how, years before, Pelops cast his charioteer Myrtilus into the sea; ever since, evil has never left his house. At that moment Clytemnestra enters, launching a furious attack on her daughter, and attempting to justify her killing of Agamemnon by reference to his previous sacrifice of Iphigenia. Having secured permission to reply, Electra defends her father: the sacrifice of Iphigenia was required because, thanks to her father's mistaken killing of an animal in a grove sacred to Artemis, Artemis was restraining the winds for the Greek fleet, and so without the sacrifice there was no prospect of a journey to Troy or a return home.

Her speech ends with an attack on her mother. The chorus note the bitterness of her words, and Clytemnestra responds in kind; the queen turns to make a prayer to Apollo, whose statue stands outside the house.

As if in answer to Clytemnestra's prayer, the Paedagogus enters with news of Orestes' death. Clytemnestra is giddy with excitement; Electra is broken. The death is described in a speech of remarkable vividness: after dramatic success at the Pythian Games, Orestes suffers a catastrophic crash at the climax of the chariot race. Momentarily in doubt as to whether she should call the news terrible or profitable, Clytemnestra soon recovers, and joyfully invites the Paedagogus inside; Electra grimly proclaims the depths of her new misery. Another lyric exchange follows between her and the chorus, as they fruitlessly attempt to console her.

Chrysothemis suddenly arrives with surprising news: Orestes is alive. There were fresh offerings at the tomb when she arrived there, and (she correctly infers) only he could have left them there. But Electra believes that she knows the truth and refuses to believe; Chrysothemis is downcast to learn that she was mistaken. Suddenly Electra proposes a plan to her sister: the killing of Aegisthus. Chrysothemis rejects it as impractical, and the sisters part in anger. Another song follows from the chorus, in which they celebrate Electra's bravery and devotion to her father.

Orestes arrives, carrying the ashes that are supposed to be his own; he gives them to Electra (whom he does not recognize), who delivers a memorable lament over her brother's urn. In the course of that lament she reveals her identity; at its conclusion, Orestes is overcome with grief, too stunned at first to identify himself to her. Eventually he does so, taking back the urn; she responds with intense joy. During the song that follows Orestes attempts to curb her enthusiasm given their dangerous location in front of their enemies' house. He then sets out his plan to her, but before they can do anything there is a noise at the door: it is the Paedagogus, who roundly rebukes them for their carelessness. A further, briefer recognition scene follows, in which Electra encounters for the first time in many years the man who once helped her rescue the baby Orestes. Now they turn to the matter in hand; after a brief prayer to Apollo, Electra accompanies the two men into the house. The chorus briefly sing of their quest for vengeance.

Electra comes back on stage, in case Aegisthus returns as the men go about their task. Clytemnestra's screams for mercy can be heard from inside, while Electra delivers a merciless commentary on her mother's death. Orestes then returns, just as Aegisthus is seen approaching the house; he then heads back inside. Aegisthus has heard that Orestes is dead; Electra appears downcast, unusually compliant now that her last hope has apparently gone. Orestes and the Paedagogus enter with Clytemnestra's body, covered; when Aegisthus uncovers it, expecting to see Orestes, he is shocked to see the dead body of his lover. He quickly realises that

Orestes is speaking to him; Orestes forces him inside, to kill him in the very spot where his father was slain.

...

Studying the reception of Sophocles' Electra requires a detailed appreciation of its plot; hence its presentation above (albeit still in summary form) at such length. For the other six plays of Sophocles that have come down to us complete, no other tragic treatments from the classical period survived the end of the ancient world. If a modern play or painting evokes the tragic story of Ajax, say, or Philoctetes, there is a reasonable possibility that Sophocles provided the inspiration; Aeschylus' Hoplôn Krisis ("The Judgment of the Arms") or the Philoctetes dramas of Aeschylus and Euripides, which survive only in fragments, have not had the same impact on the creative minds of poets, painters, and film-makers. That is not to say that fragmentary drama has had no broader cultural reception—just that it has been much less than that of the plays that survive in full.

With Electra, however, matters are more complicated, thanks to the welcome survival of competing versions from the 5th century down to our own day: Aeschylus' Libation Bearers, the second play of his Oresteia trilogy, and Euripides' Electra and Orestes. Electra is a character in these three other plays, which have been known in the Greek-speaking world continuously since their first performances, and in the west during antiquity and then again since the fifteenth century. So a painting or film that portrays Electra could be a response to one of these other works, or to more than one, rather than to Sophocles' Electra in particular. And artists who claim to be inspired by one of these plays may nevertheless have been affected by elements of the others. So care is needed if we are to discern to what extent Sophocles' Electra is evoked by any later artform. Familiarity with the details of the plot and the overall character of the play offers us an opportunity to make these kinds of judgment.

In Literature

The story of the reception of Sophocles' *Electra* begins with an unanswered question: did the play come before or after Euripides' play of the same name? The two dramas were probably produced within a few years of each other; the frequency in Euripides' iambic trimeters of resolutions (the substitution, under certain circumstances, of two short syllables in place of a long one) dates his play to between 422 and 416 BC, while similarities between Sophocles' *Electra* and his *Philoctetes* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, themselves securely dated to

409 and 401, suggest that this play was one of Sophocles' latest dramas.¹ But these data are insufficient to establish which came first. If Sophocles' play was prior, Euripides' drama would constitute the first known instance of its reception, with many in the audience for Euripides' play having already seen Sophocles'; when they heard that an *Electra* was to appear among Euripides' offerings at the dramatic festival that year, they would have wondered how he would interact with the recent drama by his elder contemporary. The question of priority is thus crucial for the interpretation and reception of both plays, and it is regrettable that we cannot answer it conclusively.

Nevertheless, whichever play preceded the other, it is usually more helpful to consider them both as alternative responses to Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* of 458 BC rather than one responding to the other. For what it is worth, I am weakly inclined to place Euripides' play before Sophocles', because of the stylistic features that associate Sophocles' play with two other dramas first performed several years after the span of time within which Euripides' *Electra* is most likely to have fallen; and if that is correct, the issue of the reception of Sophocles by Euripides does not arise. Euripides' *Orestes*, produced in 408 when Sophocles had less than three years to live, probably does postdate Sophocles' *Electra*, but that play, despite featuring Electra as a major character, does not interact with Sophocles' *Electra* in particular as opposed to subverting the Orestes myth as a whole.

Whatever the exact date of its first performance, Sophocles' *Electra* is likely to have seen reperformances from shortly after its first production. The tradition of reperforming tragedies was well established by the last part of the 5th century;² Sophocles himself may have supervised reperformances of *Electra* at deme festivals after its première, which presumably took place in Athens. Depending on our definition of 'reception', the earliest instances of the reception of Sophocles' play may thus have been directed by Sophocles himself. Creative reworkings in such reperformances will have been inevitable, especially when Sophocles himself was no longer involved in them; plays were altered to suit new dramatic circumstances, for example by increasing the size of the main parts to fit the greater focus on the star actor seen in this period. Reperformance became a part of the greatest tragic festival, the Dionysia, in 386. We have the names of only a few of the plays reperformed there, and *Electra* is not among them, but it is entirely possible that it did see a reperformance there.

1 See Finglass (2007) 1–4; also (2011) 1–11.

2 For the early reperformance of tragedy see Finglass (2015a); (2015b); Lamari (2015).

Thanks to an anecdote recorded by the Roman scholar Aulus Gellius, we know of at least one 4th-century performance of the play at Athens.³ According to Gellius, the actor Polus of Aegina, active in the second half of the 4th century,⁴ when performing the lead role in *Electra* at Athens, delivered that character's famous lament over the supposed ashes of Orestes while holding an urn containing the remains of his own child.⁵ The moving story points to one reason why actors may have found *Electra* so conducive for repeated performance: its fixation on the character of Electra, who is on stage for a greater percentage of the play than any other Sophoclean character, and who has so many set piece moments that a talented actor could exploit to the full. Polus draws attention to the most affecting passage in Electra's role, and yet makes it even more emotional thanks to his choice of prop, setting up a complex intertwining between the worlds of fiction and of reality: a fascinating instance of an actor interacting with Sophocles' original material to fashion something new.

Polus is not the only great artiste associated with our play's protagonist. Theodorus, an actor "already wealthy enough by 362 to make a large contribution to the rebuilding of the temple of Apollo at Delphi",⁶ is said by the fourth-century orator Demosthenes to have played Antigone,⁷ but Electra too was in his repertoire, as we can infer from a story in Plutarch, a Greek writer in the late first to early second century AD.⁸ Theodorus' wife is said to have denied him her favors while he was participating in some (presumably dramatic) competition; when he wins, she yields herself to him, declaring "Son of Agamemnon, now it is permitted for you [to see] these things", which is the first line of Sophocles' *Electra*,⁹ and which forms a more satisfying conclusion if Theodorus is imagined to have performed the very play which his wife now chooses to cite.

Two references to *Electra* in our evidence for 4th-century actors may not seem much, but they are two more than we have for most plays; they permit the cautious inference that *Electra* was a reasonably popular drama for at least the century after Sophocles' death, since at least two of the leading

3 Aulus Gellius *Attic Nights* 6.5.

4 Plutarch *Demosthenes* 28.3; cf. Philochorus *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* 328 F 222.

5 For Polus see Easterling (2002) 335–6; Holford-Strevens (1999) 238; (2005); Duncan (2005) 63–5.

6 Hall (2007) 284 (with references and bibliography in n. 106).

7 Demosthenes 19.246.

8 Plutarch *Quaestiones Convivales* 737ab. The inference is made by O'Connor (1908) 101; cf. Duncan (2005) 59–63.

9 That is, line 2 in the modern numeration, since line [1] is probably spurious: see Finglass (2007) 90–2 (*ad loc.*).

This explicit value judgment, made perhaps less than two centuries after Sophocles' death, is a remarkable testimony. Of all the plays that Dioscorides could have chosen, he selects two that turn out to be among the seven that survived antiquity complete. If we take 123 as the most likely number of plays written by Sophocles,¹³ and assume that none had been lost by Dioscorides' time (a reasonable assumption), the chance of him selecting at random two plays from the seven which would be preserved in full is one in over 300. Such odds suggest that *Electra*, like *Antigone*, had already achieved the greater popularity that would facilitate its preservation when so many other plays were lost; that is consistent with the picture tentatively drawn above for the 4th century. That popularity is likely to have manifested itself in performances—actors will have continued to feature speeches from the play in their repertoire, perhaps particularly the speech over the urn favored by Polus. Indeed, it is a performance which is envisaged by Dioscorides' epigram—the final speaker is identifying not a play but a mask.¹⁴ But these performances will have stimulated the production of copies for reading, copies which in their turn will have inspired the production of further performances by keeping the play before the eyes of the public.

A later epigrammatist, Statilius Flaccus, who “must have flourished not much if at all later than the first decade A.D.,” also refers to Sophocles' *Electra* in the context of a poem praising the ability of its author:¹⁵

Οἰδίποδες δισσοί σε καὶ Ἥλέκτρη βαρύνῃς
καὶ δαίπνοις ἐλαθεῖς Ἀτρεὺς Ἥελιος
ἄλλα τε πουλυπαθέσσι, Σοφόκλεες, ἄμφι τυράννοις
ἄξια τῆς Βρομίου βύβλα χοροῖτυπῆς
ταγὸν ἐπὶ τραγικοῖο κατήνησαν θιάσοιο
αὐτοῖς ἡρώων φθελγζάμενον στόμασι.

5

Two plays on Oedipus, Electra's grievous wrath, the sun put to flight by the feast of Atreus, and other books worthy of Dionysus' choral dance about kings of manifold sufferings—these have approved you, Sophocles, as leader of the Tragic company; you, who have spoken with your heroes' very lips.

13 Sommerstein (2012) 192 argues that this is the most likely of the various figures that have come down to us.

14 So rightly Nervegna (2014) 164–5.

15 Statilius Flaccus *Palatine Anthology* 9.98 = 3821–6 *GP* (translation by Gow/Page; quotation from II 451); see Holford-Strevens (1999) 220.

The shorn mask representing Electra (or Antigone) in Dioscorides' epigram emphasised her status as a mourner, whose hair was cut as a sign of grief; her mourning is also to the fore in the anecdote concerning Polus and the urn. Statilius' characterisation of Electra as βαρύνηνις ("of grievous wrath") by contrast, emphasises her passionate hatred for her father's killers; her intense sorrow in the play is accompanied by a fury of which she herself is all too well aware, and it is notable that both these aspects of her characterisation are highlighted in the little that survives of the ancient reception of the drama. Sophocles' Electra is not, in ancient tradition, simply a stereotypical mourner.

Statilius' epigram lists four plays of Sophocles—his *Oedipus Tyrannus*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Electra*, and *Atrous* or *Thyestes*—and three come from the seven which happen to survive complete. Again, this suggests that these plays enjoyed a particular influence in antiquity, since the chance of this happening at random is one in 2,500.¹⁶ The probability of both these epigrams (and there are no others that name plays for us to take into account) ending up purely by chance with such a concentration of the plays which happened to survive complete is infinitesimal. These odds prove that the plays that survived antiquity were already enjoying particular popularity at an early period in their transmission. It is especially remarkable that *Electra* is named once more, the only drama which occurs both this list and that of Dioscorides; again, this fits the picture cautiously established above for the 4th century. So we can say with some confidence that *Electra* was one of the most popular plays of Sophocles (whether performed in its entirety or as extracts), and evidence for that popularity is apparent in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC and the 1st century AD. But whereas Dioscorides' epigram had referred to performance, Statilius' highlights books; this may be symptomatic of a gradual shift from appreciating the work as a play to be performed, in full or in extracts, to a book to be read—though of course for most of antiquity the two were not mutually exclusive as forms of reception.

Latin literature sheds further light on the reception of Sophocles' *Electra*. The play had an impact on republican Latin tragedy,¹⁷ as we can infer in the first instance from Pacuvius' *Dulorestes* ("Orestes the Slave") a drama dated between 200 and 140 BC. Our knowledge of that play is sparse, but the title indicates that Orestes returned home in the disguise of a slave; this aligns it with Sophocles' tragedy, even though there Orestes chooses a different means

16 I am grateful to Brendan Finglass for working this out for me.

17 For the influence of Sophocles on this genre see Holford-Strevens (1999) 221–7; Nervegna (2014) 178.

of concealing his identity.¹⁸ The few fragments contain a speech from one character threatening to imprison another, possibly delivered by Aegisthus to Electra; similar menaces are reported in Sophocles' play.¹⁹ So too the statement from Orestes (or perhaps Electra) that (s/)he wishes to "grow like my mother in my character, so that I could avenge my father" may recall lines from Sophocles' play in which Electra associates her own shameful behavior with the φύσις [nature] inherited from her mother.²⁰ And a remark in which the speaker warns the addressee not to shame his/her age may have been delivered by Clytemnestra to Electra, just as in Sophocles' play Clytemnestra notes that Electra's words are inappropriate for her age.²¹ Pacuvius was from Brundisium, and retired to Tarentum; these southern Italian connections (inherited from his uncle Ennius, who claimed to have three hearts, one Roman, one Greek, one Oscan) may account for his familiarity with Greek tragedy, since performance traditions in these Greek-speaking lands, already present in the 4th century as we know thanks to visual evidence, are likely to have remained strong.²²

The *Electra* of Atilius, a drama perhaps from the same period as Pacuvius, was also influenced by Sophocles' play, as the Roman orator of the first century BC, Cicero, makes clear:

qui Ennii Medeam aut Antiopam Pacuvii spernat aut reiciat, quod se isdem Euripidis fabulis delectari dicat, Latinas litteras oderit? Synephebos ego, inquit, potius Caecilii aut Andriam Terentii quam utramque Menandri legam? a quibus tantum dissentio, ut, cum Sophocles vel optime scripserit Electram, tamen male conversam Atilii mihi legendam putem, de quo Lucilius: "ferreum scriptorem", verum, opinor, scriptorem tamen, ut legendus sit.

18 Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers* also features a disguised Orestes, but much less is made of the motif there, and in any case Aeschylus was much less popular than Sophocles in this period and so less likely to be a model ("there is no literary source confirming the Aeschylean paternity of any Roman tragedy": Nervegna (2014) 178).

19 Pacuvius *Dulorestes* fr. 94 Schierl *nam te in tenebrica saepe lacerabo fame | clausam et fatigans artus torte distraham*; cf. Sophocles *Electra* 378–84.

20 Pacuvius *Dulorestes* fr. 97 Schierl *utinam nunc matrescam ingenio, ut meum patrem ulcisci queam*.

21 Pacuvius *Dulorestes* fr. 92 Schierl *primum hoc abs te oro: ni me inexorabilem | faxis, ni turpassis vanitudine aetatem tuam*; Sophocles *Electra* 612–14.

22 See below. "Note the consistency between the pictorial record from South Italy and the Greek models used by Roman dramatists": Nervegna (2014) 178, with examples.

Who would despise or reject Ennius' *Medea* or Pacuvius' *Antiope*, on the grounds that he is delighted by the corresponding plays of Euripides, but detests Latin literature? Am I to read, he asks, Caecilius' *Young Comrades* or Terence's *Woman of Andros* rather than the same two comedies of Menander? I disagree with such people so strongly, that, although Sophocles wrote an outstanding *Electra*, I would nevertheless think that Atilius' poor translation was worth reading. Lucilius called him "an iron writer"—but still a writer, in my view, so that he deserves to be read.

Cicero *On the ends of good and evil* 1.4–5

Verses from this very tragedy were recited at Julius Caesar's funeral to stir up the populace, as we learn from Svetonius:

inter ludos cantata sunt quaedam ad miserationem et invidiam caedis eius accommodata, ex Pacuvi Armorum iudicio: "men servasse, ut essent qui me perderent"? [*fr.* 31 *Schierl*] et ex *Electra* Atili ad similem sententiam.

Among the games verses were sung fit for inciting pity and jealousy, from Pacuvius' *Judgement of the Arms* the line "Did I save them, so that there would be men to destroy me?", and from the *Electra* of Atilius to the same effect.

Svetonius *The Deified Julius* 1.84.2

Thanks to Svetonius, we are confronted with the fascinating possibility that Sophocles' *Electra*, via Atilius' translation, had an impact on events at Rome in the pivotal year 44 BC. Certainly, Sophocles' play could be given a Caesarian slant in the right context, presenting as it does a great leader who had won a mighty victory abroad treacherously slain at home by someone who should have been closest to him. The Caesarian party, even deprived of their chief, had more resources to rely on than Agamemnon's did, of course—an impartial assessment would hardly equate them with *Electra*. But it would have suited Caesar's successors to invoke Sophocles' portrayal of the children of Agamemnon: both *Electra*'s profound expressions of grief, and the two siblings' passionate desire for vengeance.

Cicero's praise for Atilius' play and its delivery before the populace at Caesar's funeral suggest that it had a broad appeal, among intellectuals and the masses²³—we would dearly love to know exactly how it interacted with

²³ Thus Nervegna (2014) 178.

its Sophoclean original. Moreover, Cicero's positive assessment of Sophocles' *Electra* is a further testimonium to that play's reputation. It is Atilius' play whose virtue he wishes to highlight, but he makes no effort to do this by criticising the drama which was its model; the brilliance of Sophocles' play was too widely acknowledged.²⁴ Cicero's brother, Quintus, wrote an *Electra*, one of four tragedies that he composed in sixteen days;²⁵ we cannot say whether his model was Sophocles' or Euripides' play, but the far greater popularity of the former in antiquity makes it more likely that Quintus was responding to Sophocles.

A generation or so after Cicero, the poet Propertius incorporated a reference to Sophocles' *Electra* at the start of one of his elegies:

Non ita Dardanio gavisus, Atrida, triumpho es,
 cum caderent magnae Laomedontis opes;
 [...]
 nec sic Electra salvum cum aspexit Oresten
 cuius falsa tenens flevrat ossa soror;
 [...]
 quanta ego praeterita collegi gaudia nocte:
 immortalis ero si altera talis erit.

Son of Atreus, you did so not rejoice in his triumph when the great wealth of Laomedon was falling . . . , not did Electra, when she saw that Orestes was safe, whose supposed bones she had wept for as she held them . . . , to the extent of the joys that I experienced during the past night; I will be immortal, if there is another like it.

Propertius 2.14.1–10

Perhaps Propertius' reference to Electra holding the urn does not necessarily imply deep familiarity with Sophocles' play, since that episode might have been known even to people who had never seen or read the drama. Even if that is true, it is still important evidence for its popularity, or rather the popularity of a particular scene. But Propertius' words suggest an acquaintance with Sophocles' work that was more than skin-deep; the emphasis on intense joy mirrors the culmination and aftermath of the recognition scene in *Electra*, where the protagonist's happiness is vividly described. This is not typical of

24 Contrast Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 2.48–50, which compares Pacuvius' *Niptra* favorably to Sophocles' play of that name.

25 Cicero *Letters to his brother Quintus* 3.5.7.

such scenes in tragedy, where darker thoughts tend to intrude soon after the moment of recognition,²⁶ and so may indicate that Propertius was responding to Sophocles' play at first hand, and expecting at least some of his readers to do the same.

A further work of Latin literature that alludes to Sophocles' *Electra* is the anonymous *Octavia* ascribed to the first century AD playwright and philosopher Seneca.²⁷ Octavia's entry at the start of that play "to set her own grief against the background of nature reviving for the toils of the day" recalls the opening scene of Sophocles' play; "the parallel carries the implication that Octavia, like her Greek counterpart, can find no comfort in the quiet of the night, so great is the bereavement consequent upon the destruction of her whole family".²⁸ The exchange between Clytemnestra and Electra towards the end of Seneca's *Agamemnon* (953–77) might also show Sophoclean influence, although it is no mere copy of the earlier play; "in Sophocles both women are flawed and vulnerable, and their relationship is shown to be mutually degrading; Seneca's Electra is a blameless heroine who defied with wit and courage a hysterical adulteress".²⁹ In such cases it is hard to determine whether the later author is purposefully adapting a scene that some of his readers will recognize, or whether he has hit upon a similar type of episode by chance and no relationship is at issue.

The 2nd-century AD satirist Lucian also refers to a scene from our play, as follows:

ἐξῆς δὲ μετὰ τήνδε τὴν εἰκόνα ἕτερον δρᾶμα γέγραπται δικαιοτάτον, οὗ τὸ ἀρχέτυπον ὁ γραφεὺς παρ' Εὐριπίδου ἢ Σοφοκλέους δοκεῖ μοι λαβεῖν· ἐκεῖνοι γὰρ ὁμοίαν ἔγραψαν τὴν εἰκόνα. τῷ νεανίᾳ τῷ ἐταίρῳ Πυλάδῃ τε ὁ Φωκεὺς καὶ Ὁρέστης δοκῶν ἤδη τεθνάναι λαθόντ' ἐς τὰ βασιλεια παρελθόντε φονεύουσιν ἄμφω τὸν Αἰγισθον· ἡ δὲ Κλυταιμνήστρα ἤδη ἀνήρηται καὶ ἐπ' εὐνῆς τινος ἡμίγυμνος πρόκειται καὶ θεραπεία πᾶσα, ἐκπεπληγμένοι τὸ ἔργον οἱ μὲν ὥσπερ βοῶσιν, οἱ δὲ τινες ὄπη φύγωσι περιβλέπουσι. σεμνὸν δὲ τι ὁ γραφεὺς ἐπενόησεν, τὸ μὲν ἀσεβὲς τῆς ἐπιχειρήσεως δείξας μόνον καὶ ὥς ἤδη πεπραγμένον παραδραμῶν, ἐμβραδύνοντας δὲ τοὺς νεανίσκους ἐργασάμενος τῷ τοῦ μοιχοῦ φόνῳ.

26 See Finglass (2007) 470–1 (on 1232–87).

27 See Lader (1909).

28 Ferri (2003) 121, 119.

29 Tarrant (1976) 351 (on 953ff.); on possible similarities in lines 7–11 he comments that "Seneca derives nothing essential from Sophocles, and the resemblances may be due to simple coincidence".

Straight after this picture another most righteous drama is represented, whose model the artist seems to me to have taken from Euripides or Sophocles, since they portrayed a similar picture. The two young companions, Pylades the Phocian and Orestes, who is thought already to have died, have secretly entered the palace and are both slaying Aegisthus. Clytemnestra has already been killed and is lying half-naked on a bed; as for the servants, stunned at the deed, some are shouting, while others are looking for a place to flee. The artist's conception is a noble one, merely sketching the impiety of the undertaking and passing over it as something already accomplished, and depicting the young men as taking their time over the killing of the adulterer.

Lucian 10.23

Although the speaker says that the scene could be taken from Euripides or Sophocles, in fact it must refer to the latter's play, since only there is Clytemnestra killed before Aegisthus. The speaker's confusion probably reflects the greater popularity of Euripides in this period, so a scene from Sophocles, even from a popular play like his *Electra*, might nevertheless be wrongly attributed to him. The reference to the picture "merely sketching the impiety of the undertaking" is arguably also a response to Sophocles' play, where the portrayal of the matricide is grim but brief, and the emphasis falls rather on the great moment of recognition between the siblings, and, to a lesser extent, on the entrapment of Aegisthus; both Aeschylus' and Euripides' dramas, by contrast, place far more emphasis on Clytemnestra's death. The description of the painting may suggest that this scene was in fact depicted in ancient art. Certainly, it was in the 18th and 19th centuries, and the inspiration for those later paintings may even have come not just from Sophocles' play, but also from Lucian's description here.³⁰

Evidence for the popularity of Sophocles' play can also be discerned from the ancient manuscripts that contain texts of the drama, fragments of which have been preserved in Egypt, and which provide physical testimony to countless acts of reception by readers, students, and performers. In the distribution of Sophoclean papyri as a whole, "there is nothing to suggest that, before AD 100, any group of plays was being read, performed, and copied... more than any other".³¹ The picture for Euripides is different, in that "the plays of

30 See below; thus Hall (1999) 280.

31 Finglass (2012) 13. A number of instances of "AD" in my typescript have been rendered as "BCE" (sic) in the published text; I have cited above the text as it should be written. The claim above is based, however, on a sample of merely six papyri for the relevant period, of which one is from the seven plays that survived; the picture could change if we had only a few more fragments.

the Selection [i.e. the plays which survived into the modern period in more than a single manuscript] are somewhat overrepresented even among the papyri from the 3rd to 2nd centuries BC, and by the 2nd to 1st centuries BC both the Selection in general, and the Triad in particular [i.e. the three plays which in the Byzantine period are represented in the most manuscripts], make up a decisive preponderance of the attested texts.”³² But Euripides is far better represented than Sophocles among the papyri, and so we are in a better position to discern trends in the popularity of his plays and to draw more reliable inferences from the data.

Two fragments survive of ancient manuscripts of Sophocles’ *Electra*. One, *P.Oxy.* 693, from a papyrus codex, dates to the first half of the 3rd century.³³ The other, *P.Ant.* 72, from a parchment codex, dates to the 6th or 7th century.³⁴ As their names indicate, the two fragments come from different towns: from Oxyrhynchus, a town approximately 160 kilometres south-west of modern Cairo, the source of most of the ancient manuscripts that have come down to us, and from Antinopolis, a little further down the Nile. These fragments do not make *Electra* particularly well represented compared to the other six surviving plays: *Ajax* and *Oedipus the King* have four each, and there are three of *Trachinian Women*, and two each of *Antigone*, *Philoctetes*, and *Oedipus at Colonus*.³⁵ But they are evidence that people in Egypt were reading and responding to the play well after the end of antiquity. Our evidence thus allows us to trace the pre-Mediaeval reception of the drama from the 4th century BC down to the 7th century AD, using a variety of different means. Complete performances of the play are not likely to have taken place after the start of the 3rd century AD at the very latest, and may have ceased some time before; the performance of extracts is likely to have been more common.³⁶ The papyri in particular are evidence for a continued readership, perhaps especially in the context of schools.

Euripides’ *Electra*, by contrast, has only one surviving papyrus, from the 3rd century AD. There is nothing to suggest that it was especially popular among the plays of Euripides; there is no statement from an epigrammatist saying that

32 Finglass (2017a).

33 This papyrus, published by Grenfell/Hunt (1904), contains lines 993–1007, and is now to be found in the Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library, AM 4423.

34 This papyrus, published by Barns (1960), contains lines 16–24, and is now to be found in the Sackler Library, University of Oxford.

35 For papyri of the seven surviving plays of Sophocles see Finglass (2013); (2017a).

36 For reperformance of tragedy in this period see Finglass (2014a) 77–9.

Electra was among Euripides' finest dramas, no evidence that it was prominent in the acting repertoire. And whereas normally the fact that a play survived antiquity means that it must have enjoyed at least a certain reputation, in this instance that is not the case. Euripides' *Electra* is one of nine plays found in a single mediaeval manuscript, all of which begin with a small alphabetic range of letters, which strongly suggests that they descend from the chance survival of a single volume of a multi-volume edition arranged in rough alphabetical order of the play titles.³⁷ Sophocles' play, not Euripides', was the *Electra* that dominated antiquity, a noteworthy point given that in the ancient world after the 5th century, Euripides' works generally enjoyed greater popularity than his.

In the Byzantine period, the popularity of Sophocles' *Electra* was maintained: there are dozens of manuscripts of the play, and only *Ajax* has more. There was no performance tradition during this period; the manuscripts reflect the use of this play in the Byzantine classroom, where it must have been familiar to countless schoolboys.³⁸ The earliest manuscripts of the play that we possess, *Laurentianus* 32.9 (L) and *Lugdunensis Batavorum* BPG 60A (Λ), were written in about AD 950; the latter subsequently had another text written on top of the text of Sophocles, but it is nevertheless possible to read some of what lies underneath. The next oldest manuscript, *Laurentianus* 31.10 (K), dates to the second half of the twelfth century. The other manuscripts come from after the reestablishment of the Byzantine Empire by the Palaeologan dynasty in 1259, reflecting the flourishing of scholarship that took place during this period and the greater demand for texts that this produced. Most of these manuscripts are likely to have been written at Constantinople, given the status of that city as a cultural centre; but at least one, *Laurentianus conventi soppressi* 152 (G), which dates to 1282, is known to have been written in south Italy, which remained Greek speaking centuries after the end of Byzantine hegemony in the region. The reception of Sophocles' *Electra* in this period is thus not simply limited to the territory of the Byzantine empire.

As the threat posed by the Turks grew more pressing, manuscripts began to be exported to the west. This process began well before the capture of Constantinople in 1453. So the first Sophoclean manuscript known to have been brought to Italy from the Byzantine empire arrived in 1413, delivered by the humanist Giovanni Aurispa to the Chancellor of Florence; the book, written in the 14th century, is still in that city.³⁹ Ten years later Aurispa brought to Florence the most precious Sophoclean manuscript of all, *Laurentianus*

37 See Finglass (2017b).

38 See Easterling (2013).

39 *Laurentianus conventi soppressi* 71; see Easterling (2003) 321.

32.9 (L), which is, as we have seen, the oldest that has survived complete. The arrival of these books almost coincided with the invention of the printing press, and in time the first printed edition of Sophocles' plays, including *Electra*, appeared in 1502. Euripides' *Electra*, by contrast, was not published until 1546, well after the rest of his surviving plays, which appeared in print in 1494 and 1503. So for almost the first half of the century, the only *Electra* play easily accessible to the (Greek-)reading public was that of Sophocles.

The earliest vernacular translations of Sophocles' *Electra* were those of Lazare de Baïf (1496–1547), French ambassador to Venice, in French (*Tragedie de Sophoclés intitulee Electra, contenant la vengeance de l'inhumaine et trespitueuse mort d'Agamemnon roy de Mycenes la grand, faite par sa femme Clytemnestra, et son adultere Egistus. Ladictie Tragedie traduite du grec dudit Sophoclés en rythme François, ligne pour ligne, et vers pour vers: en faveur et commodité des amateurs de l'une et l'autre langue*, 1537; "Tragedy of Sophocles entitled *Electra*, containing the avenging on the inhuman and most piteous death of Agamemnon king of great Mycenae, committed by his wife Clytemnestra and her adulterous lover Aegisthus. The aforementioned tragedy translated from the Greek of Sophocles in French rhythm, line for line, and verse for verse: for the favour and convenience of amateurs in oone and the other language") and Péter Bornemisza (c. 1535–1584, later a Lutheran bishop) in Hungarian (*Elektra*, often known as *Magyar Elektra*, 1558).⁴⁰ As suits an ambassador of the state, Lazare de Baïf gives to his translation a dedication to the French monarch and a title that emphasises the immorality of Agamemnon's death; his translation keeps fairly close to the Greek. Bornemisza's play was intended for performance; produced at Vienna where Bornemisza was a student, it adapts Sophocles' play in various ways. So the prayers in the drama take on an overtly Christian, even Protestant, tone; "perhaps... this thorough Christianisation was necessary in order to create an illusion of immediacy for the audience, reminding them that while this tale was about a Greek royal family, the same things could happen anywhere at any time; that the tale had wider moral implications."⁴¹ Bornemisza himself emphasises the drama's political aspect, saying in his introduction "Consider this play, my lords, to be such an entertainment in which... human life is put right, in which you shall see how terribly the powerful King and Queen of Greece have to pay for their heinous

40 For the former play see Fassina (2012); Saint Martin (2012a); Saint Martin (2012b) (on this and later French translations); Karsenti (2012) 159–63; for the latter, Gömöri (1982) = (2013) 1–9.

41 Gömöri (1982) 19 = (2013) 4.

crimes, from which all kings, lords, great ones as well as small ones can take a lesson and a great example that God has the power to avenge".⁴² Whereas the title of Lazare de Baïf's translation emphasises the evil act committed by the usurpers of Agamemnon's throne, Bornemisza sees in the play a warning to all monarchs about wrongdoing more generally. This stress on morality in general is picked up at the end of the work, where Bornemisza inserts a concluding moral delivered by Orestes' Paedagogus.

The earliest English translation was by Christopher Wase, an English scholar and teacher (1627–1690), published in 1649 under the title *Electra of Sophocles: Presented to her Highnesse the Lady Elizabeth; With an Epilogue, Shewing the Parallel in two Poems, The Return, and The Restauration*.⁴³ The Lady Elizabeth in question, a daughter of King Charles I, was imprisoned on the Isle of Wight after her father's execution. Wase's translation is explicitly motivated by political considerations; Elizabeth corresponds to Electra, her father to the dead Agamemnon. Seventeen hundred years after a Latin translation of Sophocles' *Electra* was used to stir up the crowd against the killers of an absolutist monarch, so now an English translation of the same play is put to a similar use. The comparison is especially fascinating given the potential parallels to be drawn between the assassination of Caesar and the execution of Charles.⁴⁴ But it also demonstrates the versatility of Sophocles' drama, its capacity to act as a parallel for historical situations centuries apart.

A recent translation intended for performance was published by the Canadian poet and classicist Anne Carson (1950–) in 2001. Carson's fame as a poet means that Sophocles' *Electra* is probably better known today through her work than that of anyone else. An analysis of one passage, chosen at random, serves to bring out the qualities of her work:

42 Translated by Gömöri (1982) 20 ≈ (2013) 5.

43 See Hall (1999) 264–9; Clare (2002) 20–1; Hall/Macintosh (2005) 163–5. Before that, Thomas Goffe's *The Tragedie of Orestes* (performed at Oxford between 1609 and 1619), although not based on Sophocles' *Electra*, nevertheless draws on it for (e.g.) the Messenger's false account of Orestes' death, and even refers to its performance history; Orestes mentions the story of Polus and the urn as he himself handles the skull of his father (thus Hall (1999) 263–4; cf. Hall/Macintosh (2005) 163).

44 According to Biskup (2009) 401, "after 1660, propagandists of the Stuart dynasty... built on the parallels between Caesar's death and the execution of Charles I"; but the sole reference that he cites to support this leads to a discussion of Augustus in the 17th century.

Χο. οἰκτρά μὲν νόστοις αὐδὰ,
οἰκτρά δ' ἐν κοίταις πατρῷαις,
ὅτε οἱ παγχάλκων ἀνταῖα
γενύων ὠρμάθη πλαγὰ. 195
δόλος ἦν ὁ φράσας, ἔρος ὁ κτείνας,
δεινὰν δεινῶς προφυτεύσαντες
μορφάν, εἴτ' οὖν θεὸς εἶτε βροτῶν
ἦν ὁ ταῦτα πράσσων.

One rawblood cry
on the day he returned,
one rawblood cry went through the halls
just as the axeblood
rose
and fell.
He was caught by guile,
cut down by lust:
together they bred a thing shaped like a monster —
god or mortal
no one knows.

Carson's powerful language certainly captures the forceful spirit of the chorus's words. Sophocles' repeated *οἰκτρά* becomes Carson's repeated "rawblood"; but where Sophocles had emphasised the pitiable nature of Agamemnon's cry, the feeling of sympathy for the dead man that it created, Carson highlights instead the goriness of the act. Sophocles' reference to the killing taking place *ἐν κοίταις πατρῷαις* "at your father's couch", emphasising the easy domesticity of the scene of the homicide, is omitted by Carson, whose reference to "the halls" evokes a more formal setting. At the end of the passage, Carson's text leads the reader to think that it is the monster whose status as a "god or mortal" is unknown; Sophocles, by contrast, applies this phrase to person "who did these things", referring to the actions just described. If we are looking for a reasonably accurate rendering of Sophocles' text, this translation will hardly satisfy—taking a nominative as an accusative is rarely recommended practice. As one reviewer commented, Carson "creates an intense and emotionally charged atmosphere, but much of Sophocles' style, vocabulary, and imagery is lost in the process. For me there is too much Carson and too little Sophocles."⁴⁵

45 Steinmeyer (2009).

But as a retelling of Sophocles' play, as a poet's response to, rather than translation of, the ancient drama, Carson's work can be appreciated for the remarkable new creation that it is.

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

The earliest possible evidence for the reception of Sophocles' *Electra* in the visual arts is found in a *hydria* (a vase for carrying water) from Lucania in Magna Graecia, dating to between 400 and 380 BC.⁴⁶ That vase shows a woman holding an urn; a man is sitting nearby, beside a pillar inscribed with the name Ο Π Ε Σ Τ Α Σ. The woman must be Electra, the man Orestes. This is hardly an exact replica of the scene in Sophocles' *Electra* in which Electra delivers her lament over the urn. But this was an incident unique to Sophocles' version of the myth, and one which, as we have already seen (and might have expected anyway), was particularly appreciated during the 4th century. It would be quite a coincidence if an artist had hit upon this particular depiction even though he had no familiarity with Sophocles' play, or at least with this scene. Nor should we expect a visual depiction to correspond exactly to what was in the play.⁴⁷ The pillar inscribed with Orestes' name must represent his tomb, something that Electra has not yet had time to construct during the timeframe of Sophocles' drama. But by including the pillar, the artist points out to the viewer that Orestes is believed to be dead—something that the play has already established by this point through the words of the characters, but which a vase-painter must indicate by other means. The position of the pillar is significant, directly under the urn held by the woman who must be Electra: aligned as they are on the vertical, neither in fact contains the ashes of the man whose death they assert. Meanwhile, Electra and Orestes are on either side of this vertical line, facing each other in a silent if meaningful interaction. We can be fairly confident in seeing here an instance of the reception of Sophocles' play, which was therefore known in Magna Graecia no later than the early 4th century BC, quite possibly less than a generation after its first performance in Athens.

A generation later, a Lucanian *bell-krater* (vase for mixing water and wine) from between 360 and 340 attributed to the Sydney painter provides further

46 London, British Museum F92, McPhee (1986) §47; discussed by Taplin (2007) 96–7. For vases inspired by Sophoclean plays see also Wright (2012) 586.

47 For the inevitable differences between a work of literature and a work of art that purports to illustrate it see Finglass (2014b).

evidence for the reception of Sophocles' *Electra*, or at least of a particular scene within it, in the visual arts in Magna Graecia.⁴⁸ Two young men on the left stand and face a young woman on the right; the young man closest to the woman holds out an urn to her, as she responds with "a gesture that seems to suggest anxiety".⁴⁹ This probably evokes the moment in Sophocles' play where the urn is presented to Electra, who believes that it contains the ashes of her brother. The artist envisaged that people looking at the vase would be reminded of this particular play; the image does not make much sense without this additional knowledge. So both the possible instances of reception of the play in the visual arts from this period in Magna Graecia refer to the same scene, a scene which, as noted above, we have reason to think was especially popular in the acting repertoire during this period. Actors and painters naturally turned to this emotional high point in the drama.

Another early 4th-century vase, it has recently been argued, may also show the influence of Sophocles' play. An Attic red-figure *pelike* dated to the 380s BC depicts several figures gathered round the tomb of Agamemnon, three of whom are labelled: Orestes (cutting off a lock of his hair), Electra (holding a hydria), and Ismene, the last an obvious error for Chrysothemis.⁵⁰ Chrysothemis' visit to the tomb, albeit not in the company of her siblings, is something attested only in Sophocles' play, and unlikely to have formed part of some other version of the myth now lost to us. Hence in the mind of people looking at it the image may well have evoked, and may well have been intended to evoke, Sophocles' *Electra*. Orestes' cutting of his lock might point to its discovery by Chrysothemis at the tomb in Sophocles' play; and Electra's carrying of a hydria might point to the centrality of the urn supposedly containing Orestes' ashes in the same work. If there is a connection with Sophocles, the discovery of the vase in Cyrenaica might indicate performance of Sophocles' play in this region, although such an inference would be highly speculative; we cannot be sure that the vase was painted with a Cyrenean audience in mind.

Three gems from ca. 400 BC to the 3rd century BC, one showing a woman sitting on a grave next to a funerary vessel, another a woman sitting on an urn in a mourning posture, and another a young man meeting a woman beside a grave, have been associated with our play. The iconographic type shows some similarities to 4th-century images of Electra on vases, and it has been suggested that this kind of image appearing on a gem evokes specifically the passage in

48 Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum IV 689 = McPhee (1986) §48; see Taplin (2007) 96–7.

49 Taplin (2007) 97.

50 University of Exeter, unnumbered = Dennert (2009) §1 (which replaces the inaccurate entry that is McPhee (1986) §1); see Coe (2013).

Sophocles' *Electra* where Orestes, to confirm that he is indeed Electra's brother, shows her his father's seal or σφραγίς.⁵¹ The link is intriguing but not as satisfactory as for the vases discussed above; the seal is hardly a prominent part of Sophocles' drama, dismissed as it is in a line, and we may wonder whether any viewer of these objects would have been reminded of that particular passage. More convincing evidence for an artistic representation of the play is found in Lucian, whose description of a picture of the discovery of Clytemnestra's body may well reflect actual paintings of that particular scene.⁵²

In the modern period, most artistic depictions of Electra are not specifically linked to Sophocles' play, or indeed to Euripides' *Electra* or Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*: Electra appears in paintings as a standard figure of Greek myth, without specific associations with a particular ancient Greek text. There are exceptions, however. The British draughtsman and sculptor John Flaxman (1755–1826) produced a sketch, which he left unfinished, of the encounter of Orestes and Electra in what was supposed to be part of a series of illustrations of the plays of Sophocles, a project that he abandoned.⁵³ In this picture Electra is gripping a tripod, presumably a funerary monument, in evident pain; Orestes appears to be addressing her. The funerary monument can only be Agamemnon's tomb, which lies offstage in Sophocles' play; the encounter between the siblings in the drama takes place in front of the palace. But as with the Lucanian crater above, we should not fault the artist for including the tomb, forming as it does an effective visual shorthand to indicate to the viewer the key fact, the death of their father, that has affected the lives of his two children so profoundly and brought them to this dramatic moment.

A painting by the Swiss artist Angelika Kauffman (1741–1807) entitled *Electra giving her sister Chrysothemis her girdle and a lock of hair from Orestes for the grave of Agamemnon* depicts exactly what its title suggests. Chrysothemis plays no role in Aeschylus' or Euripides' versions of the myth, and this very action is depicted in Sophocles' play. Kauffman makes the lock of hair Orestes'; this may result from a conflation with Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*, where Electra finds a lock at the tomb which turns out to be Orestes', or with a later passage in Sophocles' *Electra*, when Chrysothemis returns from the tomb having

51 Sophocles, *Electra* 1222–3. Thus Moreno (2008) 429: "our three gems are undeniably informed and enriched by Sophocles' particular treatment of the Electran *anagnôrisis*, effectively recognition through a gem, and this arguably forms the strongest link to the play."

52 See above, 486–7.

53 For Flaxman (and Kauffmann, discussed below) see Bakogianni (2009), which contains images; this article is summarized at Bakogianni (2011) 209–11.

discovered a lock which she correctly infers to belong to their brother. Such conflation could result from a simple mistake on the part of the artist, or else because “Kauffman wanted to stress the cooperation of all three siblings and their desire to honour their father”.⁵⁴

A painting from 1763 by the Anglo-American artist Benjamin West (1738–1820), depicted, as its title indicates, the moment when *Aegisthus discovers the body of Clytemnestra*, an image that specifically evokes the final scene of Sophocles’ play; in other treatments of the story, including those of Aeschylus and Euripides, Aegisthus is the first to be killed. The painting is now lost, but was copied in a mezzotint by Valentine Green in 1786.⁵⁵ The same incident, which, as we saw above, was described by Lucian as the subject of an ancient painting, provided the material for the painting by the Swiss artist Henry Fuseli (1741–1825), *Orestes and Pylades forcing Aegisthus to see Clytemnestra’s body*, dated to ca. 1776–1778.⁵⁶ Whereas West’s painting focused on the disconcerted Aegisthus, leaving Clytemnestra’s body mostly unseen, Fuseli makes her grotesque uncovered corpse the centre of attention, emphasising the horror of the matricide in a manner true to the spirit, if not the letter, of the final part of Sophocles’ play. The same subject remained popular, providing a theme for the Prix de Rome in 1823.⁵⁷

Music

The *Electra* of 1787 by Johann Christian Friedrich Haeffner (1759–1833), with libretto by Nicolas-François Guillard (1752–1814) translated into Swedish by Adolf Fredrik Ristell (1744–1829), is based on Sophocles’ play, but shows an Electra considerably weaker in character than her Sophoclean counterpart.⁵⁸ In Haeffner, Electra “does not share her classical predecessor’s strength of will and determination. When she hears the news of Orest’s supposed death she collapses in a faint in her sister’s arms rather than plotting revenge . . . She fits the eighteenth-century conception of womanhood as weak and in need of male protection . . . Her exit at the end of the opera in a faint being carried

54 Bakogianni (2011) 210.

55 See Hall/Macintosh (2005) 178 or Pop (2015) 40 for a reproduction.

56 See Pop (2015) 39–43.

57 Hall (1999) 281 (“Egisthe, croyant retrouver le corps d’Oreste mort, découvre celui de Clytemnestre”—“Aegisthus, believing that he is finding the body of the dead Orestes, discovers that of Clytemnestra”; the previous year the subject was “Oreste et Pylade”—“Orestes and Pylades”, from the same myth, but not distinctively Sophoclean).

58 Bakogianni (2011) 82–6.

away as Orest faces the Furies is symbolic of her portrayal”.⁵⁹ A more forceful operatic portrayal of the Sophoclean Electra would have to wait until the early twentieth century.

The *Elektra* by the Austrian writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874–1929), a stage adaptation of Sophocles’ drama, was staged in 1903.⁶⁰ Three years later, there followed an opera, *Electra*, by the German composer Richard Strauss (1864–1949), for which Hofmannsthal contributed the libretto.⁶¹ A cartoon published in 1908 by the scenic designer and cartoonist Ernst Stern (1876–1954) shows Strauss and Hofmannsthal doing to Sophocles what, in the original play, Orestes and Pylades do to Clytemnestra—indeed, the former pair are if anything even more barbaric, with Sophocles presented as a defenceless old man and Hofmannsthal even attempting to gouge his eyes out.⁶² Yet “the forces that [the] opera unleashes are all implicit in Sophocles’ original *Electra*”.⁶³ As an adaptation, one scholar has called it, perhaps with exaggeration, “so free that it barely qualifies as a ‘version’ of Sophocles. There is no Tutor, no reported chariot race, no urn even, no recognition of Clytaemestra’s body as Orestes and Electra play their cat-and-mouse game with Aegisthus”.⁶⁴ But there is a single-minded focus on Electra and her lust for revenge. She meets in succession both Chrysothemis and Clytemnestra, as in Sophocles; the latter confides in Electra the news of her terrible dreams (unlike in Sophocles, where Electra learns of the dream from Chrysothemis and Clytemnestra mentions it only in her prayer to Apollo, not in her debate with Electra), and her ignorance concerning how to appease the gods. Electra counters that the victim that the gods demand is Clytemnestra herself. She is indeed later killed by Orestes, who arrives after false news of his death. But after Aegisthus dies, lured as in Sophocles to the house through his belief that Orestes is dead, Electra herself perishes after an ecstatic dance; and as Chrysothemis (who is present in this final scene, unlike in Sophocles) calls for her brother inside the house, she receives no reply, at which point the opera ends.

59 Bakogianni (2011) 83, 84, 86.

60 For the play see Lloyd (2005) 123–7; Horn (2008) 159–82.

61 For Strauss’s opera see Lloyd (2005) 127–30; Ewans (2007) 81–103; Goldhill/Hall (2009a) 7–10.

62 It can be found at Ewans (2007) ii.

63 Ewans (2007) 82.

64 McDonald (2012) 658. In fact Orestes’ tutor (~ the Paedagogus) does appear, briefly, towards the end of the play to urge Orestes to kill Clytemnestra; and although no chariot race is narrated, Orestes is said to have been killed by being dragged by his own horses. Both these elements align the play more closely with Sophocles’ original than McDonald’s words might indicate.

The frantic figure who dominates the work is emphatically the Electra of Sophocles: “the Electra of Aeschylus’ *Libation Bearers* could not have provided an adequate prototype for this self-obsessed diva . . . Euripides’ more vigorous diva, who ultimately orchestrates her mother’s murder, might have made a suitable model, but she lacks the fierce independence of Sophocles’ heroine.”⁶⁵ The absence of a chorus affects the mood of the play, since in Sophocles’ drama it “has a complex relation of support for the heroine, and it continues to bolster her throughout. By removing the chorus altogether, Hofmannstahl focuses our attention on the raw individuality and fragility of the heroine, as she enters the conflict with her mother and her misery and triumph of revenge, without any prop or stay of female support”.⁶⁶ But overall it is striking (especially given the furore at the time, with many people regarding the work as a travesty of Sophocles) how closely the work follows Sophocles’ plot, even if some important details are changed. And more than a century on, scholars have proved much more sympathetic in regarding the work as something genuinely Sophoclean in spirit, even if it neglects certain aspects of the play to emphasise others, in particular the darker side of Electra’s character. The opera has become a mainstay of the repertoire, one of the best known of all the artistic creations fashioned in response to Sophocles’ play.

A more recent but less well-known opera *Electra* (1992–3, premièred in Luxembourg in 1995) by the Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis (1925–), with libretto by Spyros Evangelatos, based on a translation of Sophocles’ play by K. Yorgousopoulos;⁶⁷ Theodorakis had previously composed the music for Cacoyiannis’s film *Electra* (discussed below). His opera stays much closer to Sophocles’ text than did Strauss’s or Haeffner’s; to date, however, it has not found the fame enjoyed by the former.

Dance

To the best of my knowledge there is no specific choreographic version dedicated to this play.

65 Anderson (2012) 603.

66 Goldhill (2012) 197. Perhaps the chorus is not removed altogether, in that the opera opens with serving girls who comment on Electra’s plight; but their part is a brief one.

67 For this opera see Holst-Warhaft (2001) 208–16, Brown (2004) 295, Bakogianni (2011) 110–16.

On Stage and Screen

Stage

1714 saw two English translations of the play: one anonymous, the other by the editor and author Lewis Theobald (1688–1744);⁶⁸ further translations followed by the scholars George Adams (c. 1698–1768) in 1729 and Thomas Francklin (1721–1784) in 1759.⁶⁹ In 1762 the playwright and merchant William Shirley (who flourished 1739–1777) was refused permission to have his *Electra* produced at Covent Garden.⁷⁰ Shirley published his translation *Electra, a Tragedy; and the Birth of Hercules, a Masque* in 1765, claiming that he had completed the work in 1744 but held it back on hearing of the Jacobite rebellion in 1745; if the play was performed in that context, it might have seemed that Shirley was attacking the then king, the Hannoverian George II, and sympathising with the rebellion of Charles Stuart (to the Jacobites, King Charles III) which in that year made its way as far south as Derby. But Shirley's political sympathies were with the Whigs, which aligned him not with the House of Stuart, but with the opposition to the new Tory ministry of Lord Bute and to the new king, George III, who had rejected the Whig politicians who had held sway under his grandfather, George II.⁷¹ In Shirley's hands, the story of Sophocles' *Electra* becomes a "vitriolic Whig attack on Bute's regime",⁷² in which the people rebel against the tyrannical rule of Aegisthus, who is assimilated to Bute; and it may be that, rather than any fear of Jacobite sympathies, which led to its being kept off the London stage.

Sophocles' *Electra* was repeatedly translated and adapted during this period in France,⁷³ although the absence of a chorus in the French dramatic tradition presented adaptors of this play with a problem, given that in Sophocles the opening focus on Electra is established by means of her exchanges with the chorus, who remain her partisans throughout.⁷⁴ An early *Electre* produced by the playwright Jacques Pradon (1632–1698) in 1677 was never published, and

68 See Hall (1999) 269.

69 For a list of translations of *Electra* into English see Walton (2006) 221–3, 214–17, although delete Cropp 1988 from the list (a translation of Euripides' play). Walton (2012) 627–32 offers a comparison of translations for a couple of passages.

70 For such censorship see Macintosh (1995), especially pp. 58–9 on this play.

71 Thus Hall (1999) 271–5; Hall/Macintosh (2005) 166–9.

72 Hall (1999) 275.

73 On these plays see Dudouyt (2013) 204–15.

74 Thus Dudouyt (2013) 208–10.

its text is lost. Translated by the scholar André Dacier (1651–1722) in 1692,⁷⁵ an *Electre* was then adapted for performance at Versailles by the playwright Hilaire-Bernard de Longepierre (1659–1731) in 1702. An *Electre* by the playwright Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon (1674–1762) was first performed in 1708 at the Comédie Française, and frequently revived later in the century. Crébillon's play introduced romantic elements not present in Sophocles' drama—his Electra is in love with Aegisthus' son Itys, his Orestes with Aegisthus' daughter Iphianasse—with all the complications that this brings. Despite their unSophoclean origins, both these additional characters have names that occur in Sophocles' play (see ll. 148, 157–8), although not there as the children of Aegisthus; Sophocles' play also refers to Aegisthus' having children by Clytemnestra (ll. 589–90), but the children in Crébillon's drama are his offspring from a previous relationship.

The adaptation by the philosopher and author Voltaire (1694–1778), *Oreste* (published 1749, first performed 1750), includes a daring adaptation of the urn scene which so dominates Sophocles' play.⁷⁶ In Voltaire's drama, this vessel contains the ashes of Aegisthus' son Plistène, whom the tyrant had sent to kill Orestes and had ended up meeting his own end at the hands of his intended victim. So as well as wrongly mourning her living brother, Electra erroneously laments over the ashes of her enemy; and the irony is heightened when Aegisthus enters and gloats over what he thinks are the remains of his foe, but are in fact those of his son. As well as adding extra (perhaps unwelcome, to our tastes) levels of irony to the use of the prop, Voltaire's addition also gestures to the well-known story of Polus' lament over the vessel: an actor's mourning for his son's ashes becomes a character's rejoicing over ashes that he does not realise belong to his son. Aegisthus' expressions of glee over his dead child also recalls the final scene of Sophocles' play, where he eagerly anticipates seeing the dead body of Orestes only to encounter the corpse of his wife. So this episode can be seen as both an elaboration of Sophocles' original and a sophisticated gesture to its performance history.

Voltaire also gives an intriguing twist to the death of Clytemnestra. Electra hears her off-stage exclaiming "My son!" (*Mon fils!*), and assumes that she is begging Orestes to spare Aegisthus; so she encourages her brother to strike. Too late it becomes clear that Orestes' target was Clytemnestra, and so Electra has unwittingly urged him on to kill her mother. This evokes the climactic scene in Sophocles' play, where Clytemnestra is killed off-stage by Orestes, and Electra shouts her encouragement to him; she dominates events inside even though

75 For Dacier's translation see Karsenti (2012) 165–70.

76 See Jebb (1894) lix–lxii; Lloyd (2005) 122–3; Dudouyt (2013) 211–2.

she is separated from them, and her passionate desire for vengeance contrasts with the chorus's obvious distaste at the killing. Voltaire's *Electra*, by contrast, urges on the matricide only by mistake; the formal similarity only highlights how different the effect is from what we find in Sophocles.

An illustration by the draughtsman Jean-Michel Moreau (1741–1814) for an edition of Voltaire's dramas published in 1805 shows Electra almost stabbing the man whom she believes killed her brother, which is the moment when he reveals himself to be Orestes. This emphasises a further major point of contrast with Sophocles' drama, in which the recognition is preceded not by an attempted killing but by a moving lament over the urn: "the fact that, in the two closest adaptations of Sophocles' *Electra* in the eighteenth century [those of Longepierre and Voltaire], Electra's defining prop becomes not the urn but the blade aptly illustrates how the part has been altered to suit the taste of the time, not for the articulated laments of the mourner but for the visually striking pose of the avenger."⁷⁷ A further French *Electre* was produced by the scholar Guillaume Dubois de Rochefort (1731–1788) in 1782. Then the *Oreste* of 1783 by the Italian poet and dramatist Vittorio Alfieri (1749–1803) contains only five characters: Electra, Orestes, Pylades, Clytemnestra, and Aegisthus.⁷⁸ It thus avoids the complications of (for example) Crébillon's adaptation with its extra romantic interests and extended families, but strikes out in a new direction from Sophocles' original by having Electra recognize Orestes at an early stage in the drama, so she is not affected by real grief upon hearing the false story of his death. In Alfieri's version Aegisthus subsequently discovers the truth and would have put Orestes to death, if the people had not rebelled against him. Orestes then kills Aegisthus and also, mistakenly in his rage, Clytemnestra; like Voltaire, Alfieri shrinks from presenting the matricide as a deliberate act undertaken in full knowledge by the children.

The play by the poet and dramatist Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), *The Cenci* (1818), was also influenced by Sophocles' *Electra*, which Shelley read not long before beginning his work; in it, Beatrice Cenci takes part in a conspiracy to murder her father, who had previously been implicated in her rape and in the death of two of his sons. Thus both Shelley's and Sophocles' dramas "are concerned with the effect of parental abuse on innocent female nature, exploring in innovative ways the conversion of the abused into the abuser. Electra becomes as cruel as her mother . . . Beatrice becomes like her father, contaminated by his blood."⁷⁹ Further similarities between Sophocles' and Shelley's

⁷⁷ Dudouyt (2013) 213–4.

⁷⁸ See Jebb (1894) lxii–lxiv for a summary and discussion of the plot.

⁷⁹ Wallace (2015) 439.

plays include the recognition scene involving a brother and a sister, and the absence of any moral dilemma in the mind of the central female character concerning the killing of her parent.⁸⁰

An adaptation of Sophocles' *Electra* by the writer and poet Peter Bayley (?1778–1823), *Orestes at Argos*, succeeded in 1825 where William Shirley's play had failed in being performed at Covent Garden.⁸¹ The burlesque of Sophocles' play *Electra in a New Electric Light* by the barrister and dramatist Frank Talfourd (1828–1862) was put on in 1859.⁸² The earliest unadapted performance of Sophocles' original *Electra* after antiquity took place at Girton College, Cambridge, in 1883.⁸³ This period also saw some prominent American productions, including those directed in 1889 by Franklin Haven Sargent (1856–1923), founder of The American Academy of Dramatic Arts, at the Lyceum in New York and at Hollis Street in Boston, and one directed in 1892 by the settlement activist Jane Addams (1860–1935) at Hull House in Chicago.⁸⁴ *The House of Atreus: Three Dramas in One Act* (1952) by the American playwright and writer Burton Crane (1901–63) combines Euripides' *Hecuba*, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, and Sophocles' *Electra*.⁸⁵

The first performance of the play at the National Theatre at Epidauros took place in 1938, directed by Tasos Meletopoulos (1908–76); the first one filmed complete was produced in 1961, directed by Ted Zarpas.⁸⁶ More recently, the production by the German director Peter Stein (1937–), also at Epidauros, and then New York (2007), portrayed Electra as mad throughout, in a striking reversal of Sophocles' original.

Post-war performances in the United Kingdom include those directed by the French actor and director Michel Saint-Denis (1897–1971) at the Old Vic in 1951 (starring Peggy Ashcroft, 1907–1991), by Deborah Warner (1959–) in 1991–2 (starring Fiona Shaw, 1958–),⁸⁷ by David Leveaux (1957–) in 1997 (starring Zoe Wanamaker, 1949–), and by Ian Rickson (1963–), again at the Old Vic, in 2014 (starring Kristin Scott Thomas, 1960–).⁸⁸ Critical appreciation for the

80 Wallace (2015) 439.

81 See Hall (1999) 281–5.

82 See Hall (1999) 285–8; Hall/Macintosh (2005) 360–3. The title refers to the electric carbon-arc that began to be installed in British theatres in mid-century.

83 See Hall (1999) 291–5.

84 See Foley (2012) 29–30, 125.

85 See Foley (2005) 330.

86 On both of these see Taplin (1981); MacKinnon (1986) 48–50.

87 This production involved a memorable showing at Derry, shortly after a terrorist atrocity there. See Hall (1999) 261–2; Griffiths (2009).

88 For the 1951 and 1997 productions see Hall (1999) 298–9.

last of these, a version faithful in spirit and translation to Sophocles' original, indicates the continuing vitality of the play at the time of writing, at least in England.

The Sri Lankan writer Rajiva Wijesinha (1954–) wrote his *Electra*, based on Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Sophocles' *Electra*, Euripides' *Electra*, and Sartre's *Les Mouches* ("The Flies") in 1971; it was subsequently broadcast in 1986. In 1966 a French translation of Sophocles' *Electra* was performed in Algeria, only four years after the independence of that country from France. As the director and translator Antoine Vitez (1930–90) remarked of the performance afterwards, "the whole audience recognised in the *Electra* their nation humiliated for 25 years, subjected to colonial rule, restored to life when hope seemed lost".⁸⁹ A notable recent adaptation from continental Europe was *An Ancient Trilogy* (1990) by the Romanian-born American director Andrei Serban (1943–), which includes performances of *Medea* and *Trojan Women* as well as *Electra*; during the staging in Bucharest, "the ancient and modern worlds collided as Clytemnestra was struck down in the box in the theatre that had formerly been restored for Romania's leading family".⁹⁰ At least two other productions have seen Sophocles' *Electra* as the third in a modern trilogy, at Minneapolis in 1992 and San Diego in 2000, on each occasion after Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.⁹¹ Such an intriguing combination has no specific ancient precedent; but the performance of plays by different tragedians in the same production did take place in antiquity. This can be inferred from the end of Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, which appears to have been altered to suit a performance at which it would be immediately followed by Sophocles' *Antigone*.

The play *Electricidad* (2003) by the American playwright Luis Alfaro (1963–) is subtitled 'A Chicano Take on the Tragedy of Electra'.⁹² It sets the story of Sophocles' *Electra* in the context of Mexican-American gang violence in Los Angeles, where the play was première; its "most remarkable revision of Sophocles lies in weakening the male characters and introducing the *abuela* [Electra's grandmother] to create a story that revolves much more around three generations of women, despite the prominence of Agamemnon's shrine center-stage."⁹³

89 Hardwick (2004) 233.

90 Macintosh (1997) 320.

91 See Foley (2012) 234.

92 On this play see Moritz (2008).

93 Powers (2005) 742.

Screen

1962 saw the famous film *Electra* by the Greek Cypriot film director Michael Cacoyannis (1922–2011), ostensibly based on Euripides' play, not Sophocles'.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, it is proper to consider it here, since we may legitimately ask "why Cacoyannis has chosen the Euripides rather than the Sophocles *Electra*, since his attitudes to tragedy and to this story in particular seem so much more Sophoclean than Euripidean".⁹⁵ It is not that Cacoyannis imports whole scenes from Sophocles' play, such as Electra's lament over the urn or Aegisthus' discovery of Clytemnestra's body—although the intense joy after the recognition of Orestes by Electra in the film is something that seems to evoke Sophocles' play rather than Euripides', since in the latter the happiness of the moment is somewhat downplayed. Rather, he directs his audience's sympathies towards Electra and Orestes and away from Clytemnestra, rendering the emotional effect of the whole more akin to what an audience experiences when seeing Sophocles' drama rather than Euripides'. One way in which he achieves this is by actually portraying the killing of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra and Aegisthus at the start of the film. Although that does not take place during the timeframe of Sophocles' *Electra*, it is nevertheless described in lurid tones during the parodos, helping to turn the audience against the pair before they appear on stage; so Cacoyannis arguably is making use of a Sophoclean technique in so manipulating his audience. The omission of *dei ex machina* at the conclusion of the drama (whereas Euripides has the Dioscuri descend from Olympus to give instructions to the characters that remain) might also be taken as a Sophoclean feature; for although Cacoyannis justified their excision on the grounds that, in his view, Euripides himself did not believe in the gods,⁹⁶ the effect of their absence is to bring the film closer to Sophocles' play, which lacks any divine guidance in what seems a deliberately aporetic ending.

Other films based on Sophocles' *Electra* include the 1972 *Electre* by the French audio engineer and writer Jean-Louis Ughetto (1938–2011) and the 1974 *Szerelmem, Elektra* ("Electra, my love") the Hungarian film director Miklós Jancsó (1921–2014).⁹⁷ In Jancsó's film, "the myth is played out in the very public arena of Hungarian plains and revolutionary politics".⁹⁸ It succeeds in evoking Sophocles' play even without featuring Clytemnestra; the action is instead focused on Aegisthus. Electra believes that Orestes will return to kill Aegisthus in retribution for his killing of her father; Aegisthus (who unlike in Sophocles,

94 For this film see Bakogianni (2011) 153–94; Michelakis (2013) 46–51.

95 MacKinnon (1986) 75–80.

96 See Bakogianni (2011) 189–90 with n. 196.

97 For these films see MacKinnon (1986) 60–3 and 117–23; for Jancsó's, see Hames (2003).

98 Michelakis (2013) 152.

is present for much of the film) announces Orestes' death and orders the people (who are present in great numbers throughout) to celebrate. The body that he claims to belong to Orestes is in fact someone else's; but shortly a messenger arrives with what appears to be genuine news of Orestes' death. Electra kills the messenger, and is sentenced to death, but the dead man returns to life: he is Orestes. After inciting a popular revolt against Aegisthus, he kills the tyrant, and departs with Electra in a helicopter. The continued presence of the people, and of Aegisthus, ensures that the film emphasises the political aspect of the myth more than Sophocles' does, although that element is not absent from the latter;⁹⁹ the audience may wonder if the film looks forward to the event that Andrei Serban's production (see above) looked back to, namely the abolition of a Communist dictatorship.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Electra*

The central study of the reception of *Electra* is Bakogianni (2011), although this book is dedicated to the reception of the figure of Electra, not specifically to the reception of Sophocles' play; so the reception of Aeschylus' *Libation Bearers*, Euripides' *Electra* and *Orestes* also form an important part of her work. It deals with aspects of all the fields discussed above, and includes both ancient and modern reception. A briefer account, specific to Sophocles' play, is Lloyd (2005) 117–35.

The key works on *Electra* in performance are, for England, Hall (1999) and Hall/Macintosh (2005) 152–82, and in the United States, Choatte (2009); see also Foley (2012), a vast survey which does not focus specifically on our play. Central works on the reception of tragedy in film are MacKinnon (1986), Ewans (2007), and Michelakis (2013), although none is dedicated to Sophocles' *Electra*.

Selection of Further Readings

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The Women of Trachis

Sophie Mills

Sophocles' Women of Trachis (Trachiniae) is a story of love, jealousy and pain, both emotional and physical. It is permeated by contrasts between the worlds of male and female, and between wildness and civilization, and by a deep sense of the uncertainty of life, as represented by an act performed in good faith that will prove lethal. Deianeira, the wife of Heracles, has been waiting for his return for 15 months. Long absences are all too typical for him, and she is anxious and frustrated. Her Nurse and the Chorus of women of the nearby town of Trachis (north of Delphi, in central Greece), advise her to send their son Hyllus to find him, since she is also worried about a prophecy she has heard about her husband. But after she has sent Hyllus, a messenger comes to announce that Heracles has been victorious and is coming home. Soon after, the herald Lichas arrives with female captives from the town of Oechalia (in central Greece) which Heracles has been besieging, and claims, untruthfully, that Heracles' motive for the siege was revenge against Oechalia's king, Eurystus, for having been enslaved by him. In fact, as is revealed by a messenger, who forces Lichas to reveal the truth, Heracles' motive was desire for young, beautiful Iole, who is one of the captives. When Deianeira understands this, she recalls an earlier episode in her life. When she was first married to Heracles and had to cross the river Euenus, the Centaur Nessus offered to convey her over, but attempted to rape her on the way and was killed by Heracles' arrow, tipped with poison from the Hydra. At his death, Nessus claimed that his blood would be a love charm that would keep Heracles in love with her. And so, with the support of the Chorus, she smears it on a robe and tells Lichas to take it to Heracles, instructing him that no one except Heracles is to wear it. But soon, she begins to worry that the charm is not what it seems, especially when some of the left-over material begins to react like acid on the cloth when exposed to the sun. Hyllus arrives soon after to tell her angrily that Heracles is in agony from the effects of the robe on his skin. Deianeira is horrified at what she has unwittingly wrought and kills herself, though soon Hyllus comes to realize that she did not act out of deliberate malice. Heracles, in agony and enraged at what he thinks is his wife's duplicity, is then carried into his home. Hyllus explains the truth to him and at last Heracles understands a prophecy that was once made to him that he would be killed by someone already dead (Nessus). Through this understanding, Heracles is somewhat reconciled to what has happened, but he is

still in agony and begs to be put out of his misery. He requests Hyllus to burn him on the pyre, which Hyllus will not do, and to marry Iole, to which he reluctantly agrees, and Heracles is carried off to the pyre.

In Literature

“The *Women of Trachis* is itself already a ‘reception’, a reworking based on fifth-century concerns and interests, of older stories.”¹ As Greece’s greatest hero, Heracles was the subject of countless interconnected, not always consistent stories, that served as the material from which poets created new narratives of his life and deeds. Long after the heyday of Greek culture, and far beyond the boundaries of Greece, Heracles retained his popularity as a kind of superman, an iconic representation of the aspirations of different ages,² but his consistent popularity over some 2700 years contrasts starkly with the post-Sophoclean fortunes of the *Women of Trachis* until very recently. The Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD) lists a mere 107 productions of the play between 1450 and 2016, as compared with over 911 for *Oedipus the King*.³ One author of a recent overview of Sophocles’ influence on modern literature and art notes that, along with *Ajax*, the *Women of Trachis* is imitated “hardly at all”

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- 1 Levett (2004) 115. Many of the stories to which the *Women of Trachis* alludes have a substantial pre-Sophoclean history, though details of their exact connections with one another are not always clear: for an interesting account of the *Capture of Oechalia*, an early epic which may have been an important source for Sophocles, see Davies (1991) xxii–xxxvii. *Fr.* 276 and 286–8W of the 7th-century BC poet Archilochus refer to Heracles’ combats with Achelous and Nessus. Hesiod *fr.* 25.20–25 Merkelbach/West (1967) knows the story of Deianeira and the poisoned robe, while 23.29–33 connects Iole, Heracles and Oechalia. Pisander of Rhodes (fl. c. 640) and Panyassis (early 5th-century BC) both wrote Heracles epics, and Clement of Alexandria’s *Stromata* (“Patchwork”) 6.25.1 in the 2nd century AD claims that Panyassis stole some of his material about Heracles, Iole and Eurytus from Creophylus’ *Capture of Oechalia*: West (2003) 175. A brief reference in Herodotus 7.198.2 suggests that the story of Heracles on the pyre was well known by the mid-5th century BC (cf. Euripides *Children of Heracles* 910–16). Heracles’ apotheosis is known since at least 600, and there is archaeological evidence for a cult of Heracles on Mount Oeta, where he was burned on the pyre, from the 6th century. Hyllus and Iole, whom Heracles commands his son to marry at the end of the *Women of Trachis*, were the traditional ancestors of the Heraclidae: Easterling (1982) 17.
 - 2 For an overview, see Galinsky (1972) and (2010), and for an encyclopedic list of literary and artistic representations of Heracles, see Reid (1993) vol. 1, 515–561, esp. 535–40.
 - 3 APGRD database, accessed 4/7/16. Depending on the tools and items one uses for the search, the database offers different results about the number of adaptations/productions of (in this case) *Oedipus the King*: on this, see Lauriola above, 272 (and related notes).

and gives it no further mention.⁴ Another contributor in the same volume devotes but one paragraph to the play, most of which is focused on the Senecan *Hercules Oetaeus* ("Heracles on Mount Oeta") and claims that the play's relative unpopularity may be explained by its themes of jealousy and lust.⁵

But given the universality of jealousy and lust among human beings —philandering husbands being rather more common than incestuous or parricidal sons—it is striking that this play has been so overshadowed by *Oedipus the King* or *Antigone*. A combination of subject matter and structure may explain its relative neglect. Its treatment of sexual passion is hardly romantic, and Heracles is "a most untypical Sophoclean hero",⁶ while the play's shift of interest from Deianeira to Heracles, causes the play to seem unbalanced, even "broken-backed."⁷ Though Sophocles keeps Heracles and Deianeira from ever meeting one another, for many later adaptors the emotional possibilities inherent in having them meet are just too good to resist, and their meeting gives a greater unity to the action of the play as a whole. Yet, in spite of its relative unpopularity until recently, and though no ancient comic poet appears to quote or refer to it,⁸ it was evidently admired enough to have been one of only seven of Sophocles' plays to survive transmission from the ancient world. In fact, its movement from Deianeira to Heracles has had notable effects on its contemporary reception: many modern versions or productions centre the play round the contrast between male and female perspectives as represented by the pair.⁹ Some adaptors foreground female issues, while others (notably

4 Anderson (2012) 602.

5 McDonald (2012) 647.

6 So Easterling (1982) 1; cf. Stafford (2012) 84–5. Untypical is a euphemism for "unlikeable", though the Greeks cared less than moderns about their heroes' likeability: Levett (2004) 60–3. But many later versions of the story diverge from the original precisely by making the characters more likeable; for example, by absolving Heracles of adulterous intent, by emphasizing Heracles' forgiveness towards Deianeira, or making Hyllus and Iole a romantic couple early in their plots, so that Heracles' attentions are unwelcome to her and one of his friends can urge him to respect his marriage to Deianeira. See below, 519–20; 522–4; 534; 538–9.

7 This term is often applied to Euripidean plays. Given the notorious difficulties that critics have had with Euripides until relatively recently, the notably Euripidean qualities of the *Women of Trachis*, such as its changes in tone and outlook (Levett [2004] 43), may also have contributed to its relative neglect. As Morwood (2008) 27–8 notes, it also offers one of biggest accumulations of women in surviving tragedy: emphasis on the female is often considered highly Euripidean as well.

8 Easterling (1982) 19.

9 See Kitzinger (2012).

the American translator and director Bryan Doerries)¹⁰ find the meaning of the play in Heracles' experiences.

Even its date is unusually uncertain. The Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama offers an extremely broad span of between 468 and 406 BC, but many critics¹¹ assume that Sophocles wrote it relatively early in his career, because of the impression it gives of being less well-developed than some of his more famous plays. Stylometric evidence from the text itself also puts it relatively early.¹² Some critics, pointing to the similarities between Heracles' introduction of Iole to Deianeira's household and Agamemnon's introduction of Cassandra to Clytemnestra's, and linguistic echoes between the two plays,¹³ argue that it should be placed close to Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, but since the play also recalls Euripidean tragedy,¹⁴ little can be made of this.

Inability to date the play makes any account of its early literary and artistic reception speculative, but it may possibly have inspired the narrative of the 5th-century BC fragmentary poem 16 by the Cean lyric poet Bacchylides, who mentions Heracles' death at Deianeira's hands.¹⁵ Tradition as early as the late 7th- or early 6th-century BC Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* is unanimous that Deianeira destroyed Heracles but that she did so unwittingly,¹⁶ a story narrated by Bacchylides 16, whose Deianeira is much closer to Sophocles' than she is to earlier traditions. Deianeira before Sophocles seems to have been a rather bolder character: her name means "man-slayer", and on early vases, she drives a chariot to escape Nessus herself, rather than relying on Heracles' protection.¹⁷

10 Doerries is best known as the founder of the Theater of War project which brings Greek tragedy to audiences of veterans and other vulnerable populations to help them with the traumas they have experienced. For his interpretation of the *Women of Trachis* in the context of assisted suicide, see below, 548–9.

11 For example, Reinhardt (1979) 34–5; 239–40; Easterling (1982) 19–23 tentatively offers a date range from 457–430 BC.

12 Craik/Kaferly (1987).

13 For example, *Women of Trachis* 1051–2 and Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1382 and 1580; Webster (1936) 164–8; Hoey (1979) esp. 215–21.

14 Whitman (1951) 46–9 dates it before *Oedipus the King*, and perhaps to a time when Sophocles was newly impressed by his younger rival.

15 Hoey (1979) 214; Schwinge (1962) 128–33 offers a very detailed account of the comparisons between the two. Kirkwood (1958) 289–94 downplays its Euripidean qualities and places it between *Ajax* and *Antigone*; see also Reinhardt (1979) 34–5.

16 She "committed terrible deeds [for she acted] very [foolishly] in spirit when [...] smearing] the philter on the cloak she gave it to the herald Lichas [...] to lord [Heracles] Amphitryon's son": Hesiod *fr.* 25.20–25. The translation is from Most (2007) 77.

17 Apollodorus *Library* 1.8.1; Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 35.89–91 with March (1987) 52–4.

In fact, her appearance in Bacchylides 5.165–75 seems to follow this earlier tradition. Here, Meleager tells Heracles that his sister Deianeira is available for marriage: since she is the daughter of “battle-loving Oeneus”, resembling her warlike brother, the audience might feel a frisson of fear at this more formidable Deianeira, especially if they knew how her marriage to Heracles will end.¹⁸ Sophocles’ Deianeira is very different: she has been detached from her traditionally fierce family, so that her mother Althaea, the killer of her son Meleager and Meleager, Deianeira’s warlike brother who killed his uncles, are absent,¹⁹ and she is gentle, kind, easily frightened and naive. Bacchylides 16 portrays her in a similarly sympathetic manner, as the victim of an unconquerable god and it may be that Sophocles’ portrayal influenced Bacchylides,²⁰ especially in the context of Bacchylides’ emphasis on the ignorance of the future, a theme which is important in Sophocles as well.²¹

At the end of the *Women of Trachis*, Heracles writhes in agony, rails against Deianeira and his sufferings, but ultimately accepts what has already happened and what will happen. But what will happen? The play is carefully ambiguous as to whether its audience is intended to focus purely on Heracles’ agonized death, or to remember that he will be rewarded for his sufferings on earth with eventual apotheosis. Given the early date of traditions of the apotheosis, at least 50 years before Sophocles could have written, it seems plausible that the audience would remember a happier sequel,²² but which tradition is uppermost at the end of Sophocles clearly has a bearing on later reception of the *Women of Trachis*. Writers and artists over the centuries have emphasized different elements of Heracles’ destiny, with the more optimistic tradition of apotheosis often predominating in later literary and artistic traditions.

In the 1st century BC, the Roman orator and politician Cicero knew the *Women of Trachis*, and translated Heracles’ great speech (ll. 1046–1102) in *Tusculan Disputations* 2.20–22 to show the power that pain could have even on a hero as great as Heracles. His translation is generally faithful except for his rendition of ll. 1081–9, where, whether due to the relative lack of words of lamentation in Latin or to Cicero’s sense of propriety, the translation fails to

18 March (1987) 52.

19 Williams/Dickerson (1978) 6.

20 Kamerbeek (1970) 5–7; March (1987) 62–4. For dissent from the usual view of Deianeira that she acts in innocence, March (1987) 66–71, see Carawan (2000), who also offers a rather different account of the literary tradition.

21 Hoey (1979) 415.

22 Good treatments in Easterling (1981) and Davies (1991) xx–xxii; Currie (2012) 336–7.

convey the agony of Heracles that is central to Sophocles at this point.²³ The story of Heracles and Deianeira was also treated twice by the Roman poet Ovid in the 1st century BC. In *Metamorphoses* 9.1–97 the river god Achelous tells the story of how he wooed Deianeira, but lost her (and one of his horns) to Heracles (cf. *Women of Trachis* 9–14 and 508–530, where there is no mention of the lost horn.) Ovid's witty reimagining of the story conceptualizes Achelous as a love-lorn, highly articulate suitor who argues with Heracles over who is a more worthy son-in-law for Oeneus.²⁴ His description of their combat is violent and humorous, almost cartoonish, contrasting with Sophocles' more sober treatment. Deianeira continues to be an object of desire in Ovid's next scene (ll. 98–272), which recounts the story of Nessus. Ovid considerably amplifies Sophocles' shorter treatment (*Women of Trachis* 557–77), but also adds slightly comic elements to the story so that his Heracles is a heroic buffoon who dives straight into the water rather than looking more strategically for the best place to cross to get to Deianeira.²⁵ Ovid also exaggerates Sophoclean details, so that Nessus gives Deianeira his entire blood-soaked tunic, rather than just the blood touched by Heracles' poisoned arrow.²⁶ Many years later, when Heracles returns from Oechalia and stops to sacrifice at Cenaenum, Rumour²⁷ tells Deianeira that he is in love with Iole and her initial misery gives way to a more heroic, Medea-like anger than we see in Sophocles. She is determined to defend her bed against the interloper and invokes her brother Meleager's martial vigour as a suitable model for what she should do. As in Sophocles, she gives Lichas the robe, with instructions to him to give it to Heracles. As one might expect, Ovid's account of the hero's resulting agonies is spectacular, and intensifies and lengthens the account of his Sophoclean original. In a great speech, he invokes the goddess Juno and her hatred for him, and recapitulates all his labours (*Metamorphoses* 9.182–98) focusing on some of his lesser-known exploits, in contrast to ll. 1090–1110 of the *Women of Trachis*, where Heracles recounts his more canonical labours. In Sophocles, Heracles kills Lichas as soon as the robe begins to poison him (*Women of Trachis* 772–82), while Ovid

23 On this passage see Budelmann (2007) 447; Holford-Strevens (1999) 227–9.

24 Ovid's light-hearted portrayal contrasts with more serious Augustan accounts of Heracles' deification which serve as a potential model for Roman heroes. Thus the passage includes parody of elements from Virgil's *Aeneid*, such as Aeneas' combat with Turnus: Galinsky (1972) 157–158.

25 Galinsky (1972) 159.

26 At *Metamorphoses* 9.131, Nessus proclaims that he will not die unavenged (*neque enim moriemur inulti*), perhaps echoing Virgil's Dido's *morietur inultae* ("we will die unavenged") of *Aeneid* 4.659.

27 Ovid *Metamorphoses* 9.137–9; cf. Virgil *Aeneid* 4.174–7; 188.

waits until Heracles' last death agonies, so that Lichas' body can provide him with an opportunity to describe a metamorphosis. Lichas' corpse metamorphoses into Cape Lichas, a low rocky crag in the shape of a human being rising out of the Euboean sea. The episode ends as Heracles' friend Philoctetes burns him on the pyre—Hyllus is absent—and includes an extraordinary image (*Metamorphoses* 9.235–8) entirely foreign to Sophocles, of Heracles settling down to sleep on the pyre as though drunk and sleepy at the end of a banquet.²⁸ Jupiter then explicitly grants him apotheosis. In the third Heracleian narrative of this book (*Metamorphoses* 9.273–323) Iole appears, commanded to marry Hyllus by Heracles and pregnant by him, and Heracles' mother Alcmena tells her the story of her father-in-law's birth, at which point Sophocles is left behind.

In *Heroides* ("Heroines") 9, Deianeira writes to Heracles in a characteristically Ovidian letter in poem form, full of urbane paradox and play with words and myth: for example, she complains that Iole has yoked the man who was unbowed by all the labours Juno imposed on him, so that Venus has damaged Hercules far more than his traditional enemy Juno has done (*Heroides* 9.5–6, 11–14). While Sophocles merely mentions Omphale (*Women of Trachis* 248–51), she is the theme of more than a third of Ovid's poem, because it is such a popular story in elegy and because the image of Heracles telling of his exploits while wearing women's clothes is innately comic.²⁹ Yet the poem also contains elements of Sophocles' Deianeira in her anxious complaints at his eternal absence on expeditions pursuing monsters (*Heroides* 9.34–40),³⁰ and Ovid has projected Deianeira's latent fears of Iole onto Iole herself, so that she is portrayed as a self-confident and threatening rival in love,³¹ rather than the silent captive of Sophocles' vision. As Deianeira, she learns that Heracles is dying, and like Sophocles' Deianeira, she takes full responsibility for her actions, though they were done in ignorance. The letter ends as she is about to commit suicide.

The tragedy *Hercules Oetaeus* ("Heracles on Mount Oeta") attributed to the 1st century AD dramatist and Stoic philosopher Seneca, shows a definite

28 Galinsky (1972) 159–60 discusses this sudden intrusion of Heracles the comic banqueter into this tragic scene.

29 Heracles was enslaved to Omphale for a year prior to the sack of Oechalia (*Women of Trachis* 248–57) as his punishment for murdering Iphitus. She forced him to wear women's clothing and do women's work, a colorful detail enlarged upon by Ovid and some other later sources who sometimes confuse Iole with Omphale.

30 Levett (2004) 116–18; Jacobson (1974) 228–42, who argues (236) that Ovid was relying on other, now irretrievable traditions besides Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*.

31 Compare *Women of Trachis* 550–1 with Ovid *Heroides* 9.125–32.

debt to Sophocles, but as a whole, it is highly intertextual,³² much longer, and shaped by contemporary Stoic principles concerning the importance of duty and endurance, especially regarding one's own death.³³ Heracles' labours are more central to this play than they are in Sophocles, and are continually referenced,³⁴ with the result that Seneca's Heracles is a more clearly noble figure than Sophocles' ambivalent hero.³⁵ Whereas *Women of Trachis* begins with a sympathetic portrayal of Deianeira that gives her rather mixed experiences of Heracles first place in the audience's minds, Seneca opens with the journey of Heracles the victorious, monster-killing hero to Cape Cenaeum, making this image of the hero central, so that when he reappears at l. 1131 in agony, his sufferings appear undeserved.³⁶ As in Sophocles, the two never meet, but in notable contrast to Sophocles, Seneca is also specific that Hercules finds apotheosis at the end of his sufferings.

The flavour of Senecan drama is very different from that of Greek tragedy, as each scene stands on its own and consistency of characters between scenes is not considered important. But even allowing for Senecan inconsistency of character, it is clear that Deianeira is less admirable than Heracles in the way that she alternates between calm (ll. 307–14) and rage (ll. 332–50; cf. ll. 233–53). In this, she resembles the Deianeira of the *Heroides* in expressing the uncontrolled passions anathema to Stoicism, whereas Heracles in his death masters both fear and pain.³⁷ Elements of the Deianeira of the *Women of Trachis* can be found in Seneca: like her Sophoclean counterpart, she is worried that she no longer attracts Heracles because she is getting older (ll. 380–408), while Iole is young and beautiful. But she is also far more violent towards Iole and Heracles than is Sophocles' regretful and sad wife. While her Nurse is aware that Deianeira is putting pure poison on the robe she will send Heracles, it is

32 Marcucci (1997); Holford-Strevens (1999) 245–54.

33 Galinsky (1972) 174–8.

34 Much later, in 1910, *Hercule* ("Heracles") by the Belgian symbolist poet Emile Verhaeren makes a similar connection between the contrast between Heracles' extraordinary achievements and his death. Here, a lonely Heracles is on the pyre after he has been damaged by the robe and recalls all the details of his extraordinary life and sings defiantly as the pyre burns under him: Stafford (2012) 231.

35 Levett (2004) 118 sets ll. 1188–206 and 1235–64 in a Stoic context, focusing on Heracles' endurance, duty and contribution to humanity. Sophocles' Heracles is portrayed in a more ambivalent manner as both destructive and civilized: Stafford (2012) 101–2.

36 For a detailed structural comparison of the two plays, see Stoessl (1945) 119–22.

37 Galinsky (1972) 175. She is not allowed to detract from Heracles' stature by being herself unequivocally sympathetic: in this, she resembles the figure of Daysair in Ezra Pound's *Women of Trachis*, on which see below, 525–6.

unclear how much this Deianeira knows about what she is really doing: her rage against Heracles and Iole earlier seems to suggest that she is acting in awareness, yet once the truth is revealed, like her Sophoclean counterpart, she is horrified and remorseful and takes full responsibility for what she has done. However, her remorse is as highly-coloured as her earlier anger, and she ruminates on the ghastliest ways she can think of to kill herself, even though even Hyllus accepts that her crime was not deliberate. Maddened with grief, she imagines that snake-haired Erinyes and other inhabitants of the underworld are before her, and she rushes off to kill herself (ll. 1001–24). When Heracles appears once more on stage, he is at first agonized and embittered at his weakening and his inglorious death at the hands of a mortal woman. This section (ll. 1218–1336) is especially typical of Seneca's relationship to Sophocles. In its portrayal of Heracles' sufferings, *Hercules Oetaeus* 1218–32 reflects *Women of Trachis* 1053–7, but it is longer and more gruesome: Sophocles' Heracles throws off his coverings to display his body, while Seneca's rips his flesh off his body (ll. 1262–4), and Seneca allows him forty-two lines complaining about his death at a woman's hands (ll. 1165–1206), thirteen on his shame at his tears (ll. 1265–77), and forty-seven on his desire to die (ll. 1290–1336). His mother Alcmena then arrives—at *Women of Trachis* 1148, she is merely to be summoned—to comfort him, and he sinks into sleep. When he awakes, Hyllus explains that Deianeira was innocent and that the blame should be laid on Nessus, leading Hercules to remember oracles that prophesied that he would die at the hands of no living thing (*Hercules Oetaeus* 1473; cf. *Women of Trachis* 1159–61). He is encouraged by the realization that no living thing was strong enough to conquer him and that he is, in effect, the cause of his own death, if indirectly. From here, he can meet death in a properly Stoic manner,³⁸ and requests both that a large pyre be built on Oeta and that Hyllus marry Iole. At last, Philoctetes brings news of his end, and it is joyful: fire itself was unwilling to burn him, even though the pyre was composed of an entire forest, but Hercules pursued the flames and entered their hottest part with his eyes open. Alcmena is not so joyous at the loss of her son, and mourning for Greece's great benefactor ensues until the disembodied voice of Hercules assures her that he is with the gods. He then materializes and encourages her to give up lamentation for him. With this happy ending, Seneca takes the story far from the sombre conclusion offered by Sophocles.

38 Like Cicero's, Seneca's Heracles expresses his pain less openly than Sophocles' partly out of propriety and partly because Latin lacks the words of lamentation that Greek offers: Budelmann (2007) 450.

The paradoxical combination of Heracles' popularity and the relative obscurity of the *Women of Trachis* continues to mark the reception of the play for a long time in later tradition. Two reasons for this paradox may be suggested. First, Heracles is a strong moral exemplar, a figure who will become whatever ideal example of virtue the different age wishes him to become,³⁹ and who is also the supposed ancestor of royal families across Europe,⁴⁰ so that the broken, sometimes violent, ambiguous Heracles of Sophocles' play was quite unappealing in these contexts. A second, and related reason for the play's relative unpopularity was that Heracles' relationship with Deianeira was just one small strand in a life which was full of civilizing labours, some which are continually cited in the tradition, while others, such as the cleansing of the Augean stables, are considered less fitting for a great hero. Heracles had done so many glorious and noble things in his life, that writers and artists tended to portray these more than his sad end at his wife's unwitting hands. Indeed, the tradition of his glorious deification, which sits oddly with a gruesome end on a pyre, is the achievement that crowns all the benefits he gave to humanity, and becomes especially popular in the later 16th century.⁴¹ So while stories of Heracles himself abound in Western tradition, the story of his relationship with Deianeira and his death via the poisoned robe was not as popular as most of these stories. Even when the story is told, it is often hard to be sure that the *Women of Trachis* itself—not translated into English until 1725 in Thomas Sheridan's version⁴²—lies behind these narratives, since Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was a more accessible source. Generally speaking, there are more references to specific stories that can be found in the *Women of Trachis*, especially Heracles and Achelous, Deianeira and Nessus, Heracles' love for Iole, and the poisoned robe, than actual versions of Sophocles' play, and this tendency holds good for hundreds of years.

One notable trend in the reception of these stories in medieval literature is the tendency towards moral allegorization. The fight against Achelous the river god is interpreted as a story of victory over vice represented by Achelous' bullish or serpentine forms, while Deianeira is generally condemned as a Delilah figure overcoming Heracles' Samson, or more generally as a bad

39 Stafford (2012) 202–244 offers a useful overview of Heracles' incarnations beyond Sophocles, and for an enjoyable account of Heracles in Europe, see Bull (2005) 86–140.

40 Galinsky (2010) 426.

41 Bull (2005) 136.

42 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 110. The Dutch playwright Joost van den Vondel translated it in 1668, but it remained obscure: Bloemendal (2012) 554.

example of jealousy. Heracles' eventual apotheosis can even assimilate him to Christ himself.⁴³

To give a few examples of the appearance of the story in medieval literature and beyond, in Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* (ll. 2095–2142) of the late 14th century, Hercules is one of a series of men undone by women, and the effects of Deianeira's use of the shirt of Nessus—Chaucer is uncertain as to her guilt—are described, in the familiar contrast between Heracles' powerful civilizing deeds and his vulnerability in other respects. In late Middle Age and Renaissance Italy, the characters of the *Women of Trachis* were also familiar. Thus in Dante's *Inferno*, 12.68–9, Nessus and other centaurs guard the river of blood, and Nessus' death and posthumous revenge on Deianeira are mentioned: Dante is luckier than Deianeira in being guided by Nessus to the other side of the river without incident. Boccaccio, *De Praeclaris Mulieribus* ("On Famous Women") 23 recounts the story of Heracles' love for Iole (though he assimilates her with Omphale),⁴⁴ while 24 tells the story of Deianeira, her fateful encounter with Nessus and its results for Heracles. Literature of this period frequently characterizes Heracles specifically as a lover.⁴⁵ For the English poet and contemporary of Chaucer, John Gower, *Confessio Amantis* ("The Lover's Confession"), Heracles is described as Iole's lover (ll. 2509–10), while Deianeira is simply his jealous first wife who will set fire to him (ll. 2560–2). The 16th-century French poet Pierre de Ronsard (*Odes* 2.30) considers Heracles's love for the captive Iole as a forerunner of his love for his own maidservant.⁴⁶ One play which foreshadows the modern tendency to supplement *Women of Trachis* with other Sophoclean plays or plays concerning Heracles is the Spanish poet and playwright Francisco López de Zárate's *Hercule furente y Oeta* ("Heracles Mad and on Oeta", 1619–1629) which combines the two Senecan plays,⁴⁷ giving Deianeira a role in his version of Seneca's *Hercules Furens* ("Madness of Heracles," itself a reception of Euripides' *Heracles*) as well as her standard appearance as Heracles' jealous wife.

The first act of *The Brazen Age* (1613) by the English Elizabethan dramatist Thomas Heywood opens as Achelous and Heracles contend for Deianeira's hand, and the scene is followed by the encounter with Nessus at the river Euenus, expanding on the scene of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 9. Nessus is motivated by desire for Deianeira, but he also wishes to show his dominance over

43 Brumble (1998) 162–4.

44 See above, 518 n.29.

45 Galinsky (1972) 191–5.

46 Stafford (2012) 205.

47 See Morby (1962).

Heracles and to take revenge for the battle of the Centaurs and Lapiths.⁴⁸ The play then diverges to other stories with close or looser connections with Deianeira's family and Heracles, in a vast mythological compendium, with narration at the start of each act by Homer. The last act returns to the story of Heracles and Deianeira. Here, Deianeira's rival is not Iole but Omphale, queen of Lydia, to whom Heracles is enslaved,⁴⁹ and whom the tradition understandably often prefers to the silent and rather colourless Iole. Hercules has been bewitched by Omphale⁵⁰ so that he is enslaved to her and dressed in women's attire, and only a visit from Greek princes such as Jason and Telamon, horrified at his appearance, causes him to shake off her spell. But it is, of course, too late and Lichas brings him the poisoned clothing with the usual results. Omphale remains loyal to him, but he kills her, mistaking her for Deianeira. Hercules commands that a pyre be built, but just as he is burning, Jupiter strikes him with a thunderbolt. A hand descends from the clouds and picks up a star from the place where the pyre was and places it in the sky as his apotheosis. Deianeira's suicide absolves her from guilt.

Two French plays, *Hercule Mourant* ("The Dying Heracles", 1634) of Jean Rotrou, a near contemporary of Pierre Corneille,⁵¹ and *Hercule* ("Heracles") by the Parisian actor and playwright Jean François Juvenon La Tuillerie (1682) follow the essential plot of Sophocles (or Seneca), but there is little Sophoclean about their plot or characterization, and the story has been reworked in accord with the French public's pleasure in stories of love and intrigue. In Rotrou, Hercules has a rival for Iole's affections, named Arcas—La Tuillerie gives this role to Philoctetes—whom Heracles threatens with death throughout the entire play until he finds apotheosis after having been burned on the pyre. At this point, he returns to earth, pardons Arcas and allows him to marry Iole. A strongly Christianized flavour attends Rotrou's Heracles, who is at first a thoroughly proud hero who considers himself worthy to be a god, but the gods humble him by inspiring the passion for Iole that leads to his doom. Once he flings himself onto the pyre to rid himself of the fiery poison caused by

48 In this famous story, which is mentioned as early as Homer, *Odyssey* 21.295–304, and is popular in ancient art, the Centaurs were guests at the wedding of the Thessalian king Peirithous, but, being unused to wine, disgraced themselves by getting drunk and trying to rape the Lapith women.

49 For Omphale, see above, 518 n.29; 522.

50 This detail may partially absolve Heracles from responsibility for infidelity to his wife. A number of much later adaptations of Sophocles, though through different means, will also soften Heracles' treatment of Deianeira.

51 Rotrou's work would also become the basis for a libretto for Antoine Dauvergne's *Hercule Mourant* (1761): see below, 533.

Deianeira's anger at this passion, his mortality paradoxically proves that he is worthy finally to be a god.⁵²

Two other tendencies in pre-20th century reception may briefly be mentioned here. In the poem *La Robe du Centaure* ("The Centaur's Robe", first published 1845), we are about as far from the dark agony of Sophocles' Heracles as it is possible to get. Here, the French Parnassian⁵³ poet Leconte de Lisle addresses Heracles as he faces death from Nessus' robe and tells him that he must expiate his greatness by death, so that ultimately the pyre that consumes him will make him immortal. The poem's atmosphere is one of triumph and transcendence. Similarly, the narrative of Heracles' story by the French historian Jules Michelet in his *Bible de l'humanité* ("The Bible of Humanity," 1864)⁵⁴ idealizes him, condemning Deianeira simply as dangerous and jealous. Here, Heracles is thoroughly virtuous and so considerate that he hesitates to shoot Nessus, because he is worried that he will hurt Deianeira. It is his hesitation that gives Nessus the time to talk deceitfully to her and hand over the tunic that will be Heracles' doom. For Michelet, Heracles' life of noble labours makes him greater than all the Olympians, so that even his apotheosis is in doubt because Olympus is too small for him and he lives on, married to eternal Youth and thus eternally young.

Sometimes, the story is imagined through the eyes of Nessus. Although he is arguably the real villain of the story, two 19th-century poets offer a sympathetic view of him. *Coloquio de los Centauros* ("Dialogue of the Centaurs," 1886) by the Nicaraguan modernist poet Rubén Darío imagines a golden island inhabited entirely by different types of Centaurs. The main speaker is Chiron, an old, noble and philosophical Centaur who talks with others about their lives and experiences. Nessus has a minor, but touching role, as he speaks longingly of Deianeira and her "beauty's sweet perfume."⁵⁵ Similarly, the Cuban-French poet José-Maria de Heredia, who wrote several poems about Heracles and Centaurs in his collection, *Les Trophées* ("Trophies," 1893), wrote a poem entitled "Nessus", in which Nessus laments that his previous peaceful ignorance living among the Centaurs in Thessaly, has now been hopelessly shattered by the arrival of Heracles and Deianeira, for whom a new desire fills and disturbs him: he curses God for mingling stallion and man's nature in him.

52 Morello (1980) 74–9.

53 The Parnassians reacted against the excesses of Romanticism, espousing detachment and discipline in their poetry.

54 <https://archive.org/details/bibledelhumanitoimichgoog>; 220–39.

55 Acercada/Derusha (2001) 122–139.

In spite of these examples, compared with the reception tradition of other plays of Sophocles, the early tradition of direct reception of the *Women of Trachis* itself is relatively limited. The highly influential lectures of A. W. Schlegel (also hostile to Euripides), first published in England in 1815, did nothing to recommend the play to a broader public either. Schlegel considered the play vastly inferior to the rest of Sophocles, and in the one paragraph that he devotes to it, he expresses the hope that it is the work of Sophocles' son Iophon rather than Sophocles himself.⁵⁶ Many subsequent critics completely omitted it from Sophoclean criticism, as though it were too great a stain on the great man's *oeuvre* to include. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given his own combative nature and suffering towards the end of his life, this most unpopular of plays appealed to the American critic and poet Ezra Pound,⁵⁷ and in 1954, when Pound was still resident at St Elizabeth's hospital in Washington, DC, on the grounds of continuing insanity, saw the first broadcast of his *Women of Trachis*, a version, rather than translation, of Sophocles in modernist verse.⁵⁸ As a whole, it is effective and vigorous and Pound's version may be seen as the forerunner of many contemporary productions in his very determined modernizing of the play to rekindle popular interest in Greek tragedy.⁵⁹ Indeed, in the second half of the 20th century, Pound's version was at least as popular on the stage as actual translations of Sophocles' play,⁶⁰ and at one performance in 1954 at the New School in New York, James Dean played Hyllus.⁶¹

The plot and even some of the imagery of the play follow its original, but its language, which mingles the "austere, direct, free from emotional slither"⁶² the slangy and profane⁶³ with more formal, even old-fashioned language in the chorus strongly contrasts with Sophocles'. Pound also adds some non-Sophoclean elements, such as a very brief appearance of a silent *dea ex machina* just before the Nurse announces the death of Deianeira, whom he calls "Daysair", the opposite principle to his "Herakles Zeuson, the Solar

56 Schlegel (1846) 109.

57 He also considered it the closest to Noh drama: Xie (1999) 214. The connections between Greek tragedy and Noh drama in their use of masks, chorus and dancing and their focus on human action for joy or suffering are frequently noted: see Smethurst (2013).

58 Cf. Galinsky (1972) 240–44.

59 Cf. Jankowski (1957) xiii.

60 Flashar (1991) 240; Levett (2004) 119–21.

61 For production details, see *Trachiniae* 7456 in the database of APGRD.

62 The early poetic *credo* of Pound, quoted by Jankowski (1957) xlv.

63 For example, Heracles in his agony cries (Pound [1957] 42): "Get away/ let me lie quiet, for the last time/aah. What you doin' trying to turn me over,/ let me alone. Blast it./Bloody crime to start it again,/sticks to me."

vitality".⁶⁴ Like Seneca, Pound's sympathies are with Heracles, rather than Deianeira, whose role he diminishes. Whereas Sophocles focuses on Heracles' relationship with Zeus (*Women of Trachis* 274–8) and implies that he disapproves of his conduct, Pound minimizes Zeus' disapproval and omits in the final scene many lines which show conflict between father and son and Hyllus' abhorrence of what Heracles demands of him. Pound also hints at apotheosis, so that his Heracles ends in "solar serenity"⁶⁵ with the triumphant last lines, "what/SPLENDOR/ IT ALL COHERES". Though Pound's iconoclastic version occasioned "indignation and amused contempt,"⁶⁶ it can certainly be argued that Pound's creativity does what a modern translation ought to do, in both remaking the play for a new audience and recreating something of the essential otherness of the language of Greek tragedy. Pound may be seen as a pioneer of techniques of translating Greek tragedy that are now mainstream.⁶⁷

C. K. Williams translated the *Women of Trachis* (1978), focusing on its theme of mutability, and of the eternal conflict between bestiality and civilization.⁶⁸ His poem "Hercules, Deianira, Nessus", influenced as much by Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as Sophocles, was published in his volume of poems entitled *The Vigil* (1998).⁶⁹ The story spans Nessus' attempted rape to the results of what Deianeira does with his bloodied shirt. Williams' portrayal of Deianeira is notably sympathetic as he imagines her encounter with the ambiguous centaur. To readers who know what will happen, he is "cunning and malignant", but for Deianeira at the moment of his fatal wounding by Heracles, he is "a man-horse, mortally hurt, suddenly harmless, eyes suddenly soft as a foal's."⁷⁰ For Williams, Deianeira represents an early example of a woefully long tradition of women's oppression as "objects to be won then shunted aside"; repression of their rage at this treatment will ultimately come at a cost.

For the London-based American dramatist Timberlake Wertenbaker, a frequent adaptor and translator of Greek tragedies, the play is also about irrepressible female rage.⁷¹ Her radio play *Dianeira* (1999) sets the story in

64 Heracles has been associated with the sun at least since the 5th-century AD author Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.20.6–12.

65 Pound (1957) 50; cf. Galinsky (1972) 243.

66 Mason (1963) 59, who also (63–4) suggests that the play's unpopularity, in the English public school tradition at least, is because that no one could assume that its final words point to a sense of well-being with gods and the establishment!

67 Mason (1963) 65–6 and (1969).

68 Williams/Dickerson (1978) 3–6.

69 Williams (2006) 415–17.

70 Compare the sympathetic 19th century Centaurs of Darío and Heredia: above, 524.

71 See Wertenbaker (2002) and (2004) 367.

the mouth of a blind old Greek woman called Irene, who is both narrator and commentator on the action, which takes place in a modern village near Trachis. The obscure nobody Dianeira is horribly mismatched with the great but “unloved” Heracles, while Trachis is characterized as a “plain of disappointment” from which only anger can arise. Dianeira and a sensitive Hyllos are especially prominent in this version, and Wertenbaker expands on details merely touched on by Sophocles, such as Nessos’ dialogue with Dianeira as he begins to die. The story follows the plot of the *Women of Trachis* and includes some of Sophocles’ original imagery, as well as some Sophoclean intertextuality, in an enjoyably smooth prose version that abridges the play in an effective modern idiom. Wertenbaker’s Dianeira, as described by Irene, is less of an innocent than Sophocles’, since she sends her gift to Heracles as a result of repressed subconscious anger, rather than genuine ignorance. The play ends on a subdued note: against their wills, Hyllos and Iole do marry, but they have been hopelessly damaged by their parents’ fates and grow to hate each other. When Iole stays quite literally silent, as it were, replaying her Sophoclean role, Hyllos wants to help her, and offers to let her go back to her city. But her rage is too much a part of her for her to let it go, and the play ends violently with Hyllos shaking her in frustration and anger at her obduracy.

Lastly, two novels, one Victorian, and one contemporary may be mentioned. Charlotte Yonge’s *My Young Alcides: A Faded Photograph* (1875) updates, sanitizes and Christianizes the plot of the *Women of Trachis*. Its Heracles figure, Harold Alison, dies of smallpox contracted from a lock of hair sent to him by his young sister Dora who caught it while out shopping with one Ernest, “Nessy” Horseman.⁷² Three threads run through Henry Hollenbaugh’s much less sanitized 2009 novel, *Nessus the Centaur*. In the first, the narrator Jonathan Nestus is a rather unpleasant person who pursues Daphne, his equally unpleasant fiancée, by pretending that he is very wealthy in the hope that she will one day sleep with him. He is also writing a book entitled “A Short History of the Centaurs”, though it concerns not only Centaurs but a vast array of Greek mythology, and its text is spread throughout the novel. But, in the second thread running through the novel, Jonathan has also come to believe that he actually is the reincarnation of Nessus, through extraordinarily vivid dreams in which he experiences what it is like to be half-man and half-horse. The third, and most compelling thread of the novel is a dramatization of Nessus’ life. Nessus is portrayed as a rough, but sympathetic character, while Heracles is seen through his eyes as arrogant and brutish. Nessus longs hopelessly for Deianeira and feels intense hatred for Heracles. Rather like the poems of Dário

72 Stafford (2012) 231.

and de Heredia discussed earlier, the pity of being a centaur, human yet animal, is emphasized. Ultimately, Daphne double-crosses Jonathan in a lawsuit, after having forced him to spend all his money on her, and thus desire for her destroys him, just as desire for Deianeira killed Nessus.

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

Vases portraying various elements of stories about Heracles to which Sophocles refers are plentiful, but vases specifically illustrating his play are largely impossible to find. Heracles' battle with Achelous, the abduction by Nessus, and Deianeira's rescue are very popular topics, thanks to the picturesque centaur and the spectacle of the vulnerable woman in distress, but many of these substantially pre-date Sophocles.⁷³ Already, a bronze statuette group from Olympia ca.740 BC shows a combat between Heracles and Nessus.⁷⁴ We also see occasional family portraits of Heracles and his family.⁷⁵ Some of these certainly precede Sophocles, but one red figure *lekythos*⁷⁶ is datable to around 450 BC and portrays Heracles holding out his hand to a baby boy held by a seated woman. Most interesting is a *pelike*⁷⁷ dated 440–430 BC, which may show Heracles and the poisoned robe: here, a naked Heracles moves right, holding a lion-skin and stretching out his hand to a woman who holds out a folded garment to him; on the other side, a woman holds out her hand as though giving orders. While there are clear differences between the action implied on this vase and Sophocles' plot, there are also some similarities, as we see an intermediary, albeit a female one, handing Heracles the robe.⁷⁸ The encounter between Hercules, Nessus and Deianeira was beautifully painted as a mural at Pompeii,⁷⁹ while the story told in Sophocles' play seems to have been incorporated as late as the 3rd century AD in images on the reliefs at the theatre at the North African theatre of Sabratha.⁸⁰

73 Boardman (1988) 834–5; cf. Diez de Velasco (1992).

74 New York 17.190.1972; Stafford (2012) 76–8.

75 Boardman (1990) numbers 1674–79.

76 Small vase used to contain oils: Boardman (1990) number 1678.

77 Two-handled storage jar: Boardman (1990) number 1680.

78 Stafford (2012) 96. Carawan (2000) 200–1 suggests that the female handing the robe to Heracles is Iole.

79 Boardman (1990) number 2911. The picture is the climax of a sequence involving stories of Laomedon and Deianeira: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hercules_Nessus_MAN_Napoli_Inv9001.jpg.

80 Caputo (1959) 20.

Archaic vases focus on Heracles' apotheosis more than on the death on the pyre.⁸¹ While Heracles on the pyre is represented on a couple of mid-5th-century red figure vases,⁸² their relationship with Sophocles must remain uncertain. On one 460–450 *psykter*⁸³ in a New York private collection, a living Heracles in his lion-skin on top of a pyre hands his bow and quiver to a young man, presumably Philoctetes, and a few late 5th to early 4th century Attic and South Italian vases show a pyre while Heracles is in an upper register, flying up with a chariot driven by Athena.⁸⁴

Later art focuses on similar subject matter, and additionally, it is often not possible to be sure whether Ovid or Sophocles is the primary inspiration for the illustration. The German printmaker and painter Sebald Beham's series of woodcuts entitled *Taten des Hercules* ("Labours of Heracles, 1542–1548) include many scenes referred to in the play, such as the capture of Iole, his encounter with Nessus, Deianeira's gift of the poisoned robe via Lichas, and his death on the pyre, but the picturesque abduction of Deianeira by Nessus is the most popular story of all those which feature in the *Women of Trachis*. Giordano Luca (1634–1705) painted the scene nine times.⁸⁵ Centaurs were titillating characters for the Renaissance, as they represented sensualism and barbarity to be conquered by human virtue, of which Heracles was the prime example. Indeed, Heracles was especially popular as a figure in Florence, where he was almost a patron saint for his strength and virtue.⁸⁶ Thus in his painting *Ercole e Deianira* ("Hercules and Deianeira"), Antonio del Pollaiuolo (1475–1480) transports the death of Nessus to a Tuscan landscape as Heracles prepares to shoot at the centaur, who holds a naked Deianeira on his back and leaps towards the left of the picture with vigour.⁸⁷ The Flemish mannerist painter Bartholomeus Spranger's *Herkules, Dejanira und der Kentaur Nessus* ("Heracles, Deianeira and the Centaur Nessus," 1580–1582) focusses on the couple of Heracles and Deianeira, as a muscular Heracles holds Deianeira with his hand under her right thigh while the vanquished centaur lies supine in the bottom left hand corner of the painting. At first glance, this would be a scene of relief and happiness, were it not for a malign little Cupid in the top left hand corner, alluding to the disastrous sequel that this relationship will bring for both parties: Nessus is not entirely vanquished

81 Stafford (2012) 173–4.

82 Clairmont (1953) 85–9.

83 Vessel for cooling wine: Boardman (1990) 2910.

84 Stafford (2012) 96; 110–11.

85 Reid (1993) vol. 1 538.

86 Bull (2005) 86–91.

87 <http://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/300>.

after all.⁸⁸ In Giambologna's *Ercole e il centauro Nesso* ("Heracles and the Centaur Nessus") sculpture in Florence of 1599, a bearded, classical-looking Heracles whose musculature, like the centaur's, is stunning, has wrestled the centaur into submission and has bent him right back to deal him a decisive blow.⁸⁹ The absolute power of Heracles may be intended to allude to the absolute power of the Medici for whom it was made.⁹⁰ The composition is similar in *Ercole uccide Nesso* ("Heracles kills Nessus") by the Venetian Baroque painter Sebastiano Ricci (1706–1707)⁹¹ in which Deianeira looks on as he prepares to deliver a blow with his club—as on many early Greek vases—rather than the arrow with which he kills him in the *Women of Trachis*. Many pictures focus on the centaur and Deianeira, and their relationship is sometimes eroticized, while sometimes Deianeira's fear is uppermost. In *Il centauro Nesso cerca di rapire Deianira* ("The Centaur Nessus tries to abduct Deianeira") by the Venetian Baroque painter Pietro Liberi (1625–1687) Deianeira and Nessus are to all intents and purposes a couple: the tanned strong centaur whose back gradually shades into that of a horse, grasps a naked Deianeira, who could be struggling or reaching out to him.⁹² The French rococo artist Louis Lagrenée's *L'enlèvement de Déjanire par le centaure Nessus* ("The Abduction of Deianeira by the Centaur Nessus," 1755) is similarly erotic: Deianeira, one breast revealed, dishevelled and distressed, is borne off by a muscular hunter with a piebald horse's body, while a small Heracles off to the left prepares to shoot him.⁹³ By contrast, in *Deianira rapita dal centauro Nesso* ("Deianeira abducted by the centaur Nessus"), the baroque painter Guido Reni (1617–1621), places all attention on a muscular, hairless centaur who reaches up to Deianeira who is on his horse's back, looking away in fear, her robes flowing behind her: they are red, perhaps to suggest the blood of Nessus. A tiny Heracles can be seen on the right hand side of the shore, evidently about to shoot him, but right now, Nessus dominates. Deianeira's distaste for Nessus is also shown in the Swiss painter Arnold Böcklin's *Nessus und Deianeira* ("Nessus and Deianeira," 1898), in which a powerful and very animal centaur grips Deianeira who is moving

88 <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/asset-viewer/hercules-deianira-and-the-centaur-nessus/bwFMYruul-SyVw?hl=en>, Compare also a picture by Rubens, c. 1640: <http://www.flickrriver.com/photos/mazanto/20440483072/>.

89 <http://www.tuttartpitturascultrapoesiamusica.com/2015/09/Giambologna-Sculpture.html> offers some excellent illustrations.

90 Galinsky (2010) 188.

91 <http://www.mlahanas.de/Greeks/Mythology/HerculesNessusSebastianoRicci1707.html>.

92 <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/129872>. Compare also Rubens' version of the scene (1638): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Peter_Paul_Rubens/1635-1640.

93 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lagrenée,_Louis_Jean_-_The_Abduction_of_Deianeira_by_the_Centaure_Nessus_-_1755.jpg#filehistory.

every muscle to try to elude him; on the right a rather elderly-looking Heracles approaches them with spear in hand.⁹⁴

Guido Reni's painting (1617–1621) was one of a series of four Heracles-themed pieces for the Villa Favorita, near Mantua, of Duke Ferdinando Gonzaga, for whom Heracles' power and courage were a mythical analogy for the power of the Gonzagas.⁹⁵ The palace of Versailles also contained images of Achelous and Deianeira and her subsequent abduction by Nessus, in *Hercule et Déjanire* ("Heracles and Deianeira") painted by the French artist Noël Coypel (1699) in high rococo style.⁹⁶ The Parisian painter Louis de Boullogne's *Nessus and Deianira* (1705) is clothed quite chastely while the centaur gazes up at her almost imploringly: the river god looks on at them and much further away, Hercules aims his bow.⁹⁷ The Villa Borghese has a *Women of Trachis*-themed room with frescoes (1784–1786) by the Italian neo-Classical artist Christoph Unterberger with Heracles and Achelous, Nessus and Deianeira and the killing of Lichas all leading up to Heracles' apotheosis in the centre.⁹⁸

The theme also interested Picasso, both in eight drawings he did of a woman being carried off by a centaur (1920) and in *Le rapt: Nessus & Déjanira* ("Abduction: Nessus and Deianeira, 1922), illustrating the climactic moment in Ovid *Metamorphoses* 9. 118–28 where the Centaur attempts to rape Deianeira.⁹⁹ *Deianeira and Nessus* (2006), a sculpture by the young Greek artist Vangelis Vlahos shows a small Deianeira, the size of a child, sitting on the back of a centaur.¹⁰⁰ The modern American artist Joe Costello offers a contemporary, sleek digital version of the scene, focusing on an implied erotic encounter between centaur and woman in his *Deianira and Nessus* (2009).¹⁰¹

Hercules and Deianeira by the Dutch painter Jan Gossaert (1517) catches the pair in a rare erotic moment in the bedroom as husband and wife, almost naked, gaze at one another with legs entwined. Hercules relaxes in a room adorned by pictures of his exploits. But the silver cloak on which Deianeira sits hints at their doomed future. Hercules hurling Lichas into the sea, like the centaur, offers an opportunity to show off a muscular, almost naked male with the

94 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arnold_Böcklin_Nessus_und_Deianeira.jpg.

95 <http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/deianeira-and-centaur-nessus>. Heracles was a very popular role model or even ancestor among European rulers: Stafford (2012) 218–21.

96 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hercule_et_Déjanire,_Noël_Coytel_Musée_de_Versailles.jpg.

97 <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/louis-de-boullogne-nessus-and-dejanira>.

98 Stafford (2012) 211.

99 <http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/24205>.

100 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Deianeira_and_Nessus_Evlahos.jpg.

101 <http://fineartamerica.com/featured/deianira-and-nessus-joe-costello.html>.

power to conquer. A 1795 sculpture by Antonio Canova reflects some details in *Women of Trachis* 767–71 or *Metamorphoses* 9. 211–8:¹⁰² in his *Ercole e Lica* (“Hercules and Lichas”), an anguished Hercules wearing a clinging transparent robe through which his body is quite visible, takes Lichas by the leg. This scene recurs in the Russian painter Pavel Sorokin’s picture of Hercules and Lichas (1849): Hercules shows no sign of damage from the poisoned robe but lifts Lichas as though he weighed nothing at all. Evelyn de Morgan’s pre-Raphaelite painting entitled *Deianera* (ca. 1887)¹⁰³ shows her clutching her head with her clothes flying all around her. She is in despair, knowing at last that Nessus has deceived her into using his blood and causing Heracles’ death and in this painting she is evidently about to kill herself. Behind her is a body of water, referencing the River Euenus where she first met Nessus. The painting is important in its—in some ways Sophoclean—focus on female action and agency rather than the relentless emphasis on Heracles and his agency and sufferings. One commentator suggests that de Morgan may have known Sophocles’ play and considered its dismal portrait of marriage as crushing to a young woman, in Victorian as much as ancient Greek society.¹⁰⁴

The conveyance of the robe to Heracles is also represented in artistic tradition, for example in *Dejanire envoyant la chemise empoisonnée de Nessus à Hercule* (“Deianeira Sending the Poisoned Robe of Nessus to Heracles”), a painting in Versailles by Noël Coypel ca. 1704,¹⁰⁵ as is the end of Heracles’ life on the pyre. In paintings representing this subject, he is usually stretching backward, mostly naked except for a robe or drapery that he is attempting to pull away from his skin. With some exceptions, such as a fresco by the Italian mannerist artist Pellegrino Tibaldi in the Palazzo Poggi in Bologna (1549–1560), which clearly shows lacerations on Heracles’ skin and his submission to pain, artists tend to shrink from portraying any evil effects of the robe on his skin and instead represent him still in his muscular, masculine power: examples of these tendencies in representation are Guido Reni’s *Ercole sulla pira* (“Hercules on the Pyre,” 1617–1619)¹⁰⁶ in which he is almost naked and stretches up into the sky, and the *Muerte de Hércules* (“Death of Heracles”) by the Spanish painter Francisco de Zurbarán (1634) in which Heracles pulls away from his skin a robe whose edge is on fire. In *Hercules Burning Himself on a Pyre in the Presence*

102 Stafford (2012) 213: <http://www.italianways.com/canova-herculeless-frenzy-and-lichass-terror/>.

103 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Deianera.jpg>.

104 Smith (2002) 69–72.

105 <http://www.the-athenaeum.org/art/detail.php?ID=137322>.

106 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guido_Reni_-_Hercules_on_the_Pyre_-_WGA19283.jpg.

of *His Friend Philoctetes* (1781), by the Russian Classical painter Ivan Akimov, Philoctetes in helmet and red robe approaches to set light to the pyre. Lastly, the American artist Samuel Morse's *Dying Hercules*,¹⁰⁷ painted during the war of 1812, was interpreted by some politically at the time, as an anti-British and pro-Federalist statement. Here, the powerful Hercules, apparently unscathed by the robe, though he pulls it away from him, was considered to represent the young, strong United States against the British and their supporters.

Music

For the 17th and 18th centuries, the adventures of Heracles, and especially his part-human, part-divine nature, inspired multiple operas, cantatas and oratorios. While the *Women of Trachis* certainly lies behind these, they contain many scenes and characters that have no place in Sophocles, and the tastes of the times contribute to a very different sensibility from that of Sophocles. A representative example is *Ercole Amante* ("Hercules in Love") by the Italian Baroque composer Francesco Cavalli (1662), written for the marriage of Louis XIV (the French Heracles!) to Maria Theresa.¹⁰⁸ Here, Heracles and Hyllus are both in love with Iole: Venus tries to help Heracles to obtain his desire, while Juno champions his marriage to Deianeira. The plot is highly complicated but eventually, as Heracles is on the brink of marrying Iole, he dies from contact with the bloody shirt of Nessus. Fortunately, he is immediately compensated by apotheosis—a very common ending for Heracles operas at this time, and very far from Sophocles' ending—and marriage to the goddess Beauty. The opera ends with a tribute to its dedicatees. *Hercule Mourant* ("The Dying Heracles") by the French composer Antoine d'Auvergne (1761), based on Sophocles and the play of Rotrou (1634) discussed earlier was first performed at the Académie Royale de Musique in Paris and revived in 2011.¹⁰⁹ The German composer Johann Friedrich Reichardt's 1802 melodrama *Hercules Tod* ("The Death of Heracles"), dramatizes the Heracles section of the *Women of Trachis*, beginning as he sacrifices to Zeus, and contains only male soloists (Heracles, Hyllus and Lichas) interacting with several choruses. The French composer Camille Saint-Saëns' *Déjanéire* ("Deianeira") based on Louis Gallet's play of the same name (1911) is influenced by some French and non-Sophoclean versions of the story and takes the story in a different direction. Here, Iole and Philoctetes are lovers, but Heracles wishes to marry Iole and forces her

107 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:DyingHercules.jpg>.

108 The opera was performed, after long neglect, by the Dutch National Opera in 2009 and released as a recording by Opus Arte in 2010.

109 <http://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/dauvergne-hercule-mourant-la-venitienne>.

to accept him to spare Philoctetes' life. Though the priestess Phénice attempts to convince Deianeira to leave Hercules, she decides to "help" Iole by giving her the tunic that Iole then gives Hercules on their wedding day, which makes it less than a joyous occasion.¹¹⁰ Eventually, the agonized Heracles flings himself into a burning pyre and ascends to Olympus. The opera was a spectacular affair, boasting 18 harps and 25 trumpets. The Austrian atonal composer Josef Matthias Hauer also included the *Women of Trachis* in his *Chorlieder aus den Tragödien des Sophokles* ("Choral Songs after the Tragedies of Sophocles", 1914).

But the opera that has had by far the most recent acclaim after long neglect¹¹¹ is *Hercules*, originally composed in 1745 by the German-born composer Handel. This Heracles is entirely faithful to his wife, though her jealous mistrust still kills him. Though named for Heracles, the focus is on Deianeira and Iole and Heracles has merely a cameo role.¹¹² In act 1, Lichas is trying to comfort Deianeira, who is convinced that her husband is dead, while Hyllus helps her to find out his fate. Heracles soon returns safely from Oechalia with a group of captives from the sacked city, including their leader Iole (who plays a larger part than in Sophocles), and is eager to settle down with Deianeira. In Act 2, Deianeira clashes with Iole, convinced that her husband razed Oechalia out of desire for her beauty, and neither Iole or Lichas can persuade her that she is wrong. In fact, it is Hyllus who loves Iole, though she firmly rejects the son of the man who sacked her city. When Deianeira confronts Heracles and he (justifiably) denies everything, she gives him the poisoned robe via Lichas, through her sincere belief that he has been straying. She even reconciles with Iole, promising her freedom and her father's throne. In act 3, Lichas recounts the effects of the robe and then we see Heracles' agony. His son bears him off to death, and Deianeira, horrified by what she has done, sings of visitations of the Furies (cf. Seneca *Hercules Oetaeus* 1002–4), and acknowledges that Iole and Heracles are indeed innocent. A remarkably forbearing Iole expresses sorrow for her. A priest reports the events on Mount Oeta: Heracles' mortal part is burned while his immortal part gains apotheosis. The story has a curiously happy ending, Deianeira announcing her "grief, wonder, joy", at what has transpired, while the priest announces that Hyllus will marry Iole by order of Jove.

Handel's *Hercules* was revived in a successful semi-staged version in Toronto in 2012 at the same time as the Canadian film and stage director Atom Egoyan's

110 Macdonald (1992).

111 Sadie (1992) 701.

112 For Peter Sellars, Heracles' relative silence is indicative of the plight of men returning from war, who may have a lot to say but are unable to express it: Harris (2014).

version of Martin Crimp's *Cruel and Tender*,¹¹³ and is currently experiencing great popularity, with four international performances from London to Shanghai in 2015 alone. The high-concept production of Handel's *Hercules* by the iconoclastic director Peter Sellars with the Lyric Opera of Chicago (2011), and then the Canadian Opera Company in 2014 set the opera in a contemporary context of the war on terror,¹¹⁴ a trend that we will see in some recent stage productions of the *Women of Trachis* as well. His Heracles was a soldier in camouflage gear, and Deianeira, a manic-depressed suburban housewife.¹¹⁵ A stage strewn with physical rubble was intended to reflect the psychological devastation that war causes.¹¹⁶ Some minor characters in the original opera who did not fit Sellers' vision were omitted, while Iole was treated a prisoner of war dressed in an orange jumpsuit and a black hood, from which she sang her first aria, "Bright Liberty." The celebration that greets Heracles' first return was rendered as a barbecue party with beer-drinking veterans, while in the final scene his body was in a flag-draped coffin and the soldiers each paid their respects to Deianeira. Given this framework, the closing chorus praising "liberty's immortal song" and "the blessings that from peace and freedom flow," have a distinct resonance of George W. Bush's America. Importantly, however, Sellers' *Hercules* was more nuanced than the critique of Bush-era gung-ho militarism that it might seem. In a pre-performance lecture, Sellars emphasized the importance of compassion to American soldiers and their families and awareness of the emotional toll that their profession inflicts on them and those around them.¹¹⁷

113 Cf. Barcza (2012). For Crimp, see below, 546–8.

114 Johnson (2011) offers a critical review: Douglas (2014) is more favourable.

115 For an interview with Sellars, see Harris (2014).

116 Van Rhein (2011).

117 In 2011, the Lyric Opera partnered with institutions, some of which help veterans, come to terms with their wartime experiences. Some 200 former soldiers attended Sellars' dress rehearsal, and at a panel discussion afterwards, several spoke movingly of how events in the opera mirrored their own experiences: Van Rhein (2011). In the revival in Toronto in 2014, Sellars linked his production with some dialogue with Canadian veterans of recent wars: Harris (2014). A one-day seminar in 2014 at the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs, entitled "Coming Home: Handel's *Hercules*", included veterans from World War II and the wars in Korea, Bosnia, and Afghanistan in the COC's Opera Exchange. Sellars states: "Most human beings need someone to listen . . . Deep listening is what you do as an opera director every day in a Handel rehearsal. You have a *melisma*, where Handel writes 50 notes on a single word. You can hear that as florid, cold Baroque ornament—or as a description of all the pain on Earth: You pick. The veterans I dealt with knew they were being heard. It was, and is, liberating for them. They are often condemned

In recent years, Handel's *Hercules* has had by far the most exposure of all the operas which handle Sophocles' story. But in 1960, American composer Allen Sapp wrote an "Overture to the *Women of Trachis*", which was commissioned by the Boston Fine Arts Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra and derived from the incidental music written by Sapp for a performance of Sophocles' *Women of Trachis* at Wellesley the previous year. The overture is in three sections which broadly trace Sophocles' plot. An opening section with an oboe solo represents Deianeira's opening soliloquy; then a driving, agitated middle section represents the conflict between Deianeira and her husband that leads her to kill him, while the intense third section represents Heracles' agony and Hyllus' condemnation of divine cruelty. A three-note motif runs through the work which may represent the love triangle that is central to the play.¹¹⁸

In 2005, a year after the Athens Olympics, Panagiotis Karousos' "Olympic Flame" was premiered in Montreal. It is a lyrical and romantic two-act opera connecting the legend of Heracles with the founding of the Olympic Games, and is the second in a trilogy in which Karousos intends to display the greatness of the human soul and a unique Greek humanism as the bedrock of modern culture and civilisation. Its last act is based on the *Women of Trachis*, focusing on the sufferings and death of Heracles and of Deianeira although many other characters from Heracles' life feature in it, so that it is at most related to Sophocles, rather than a version of Sophocles as such.¹¹⁹ At the end of the opera, Prometheus, freed by Heracles earlier in the opera, is reconciled with Zeus, and in an apotheosis, Heracles rises to Olympus.¹²⁰ The opera was revived in 2016 at the Lincoln Center in New York City to mark the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.¹²¹

Two recent Californian operatic responses to Sophocles may also be mentioned here. The experimental director Deena Selenow's *Katastrofi*¹²² (2013 in Santa Monica) offered a "dementedly playful" reading of the *Women of Trachis*

to silence, as is Heracles in the opera. But Handel taught me that the person who has one aria per act is carrying with them the emotional weight of the whole piece. So it is with our returning vets."

118 Green (1996); the overture may be heard at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbSIPqhLis>.

119 Selections from the opera may be heard here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErF65KxoFqw> (Deianeira's suicide song); and here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jFZlmeo7dPg> (her monologue.).

120 Karousos (2014).

121 <http://hellenicamericancenterofthearts.blogspot.com/2016/03/the-opera-olympic-flame-by-panagiotis.html>.

122 Selenow (2013).

sung through musical themes inspired by Justin Timberlake's "Cry Me a River". *Sino alla Morte* ("Until Death", 2014) in San Diego, created by the singer and director of the Kallisti ensemble, Susan Narucki,¹²³ is a "constructed" opera, assembled from the music of the 17th century Italian composer Barbara Strozzi, a student of Francesco Cavalli, and the contemporary Italian composer Salvatore Sciarrino, whose short 1980 work for unaccompanied female voices *Le Donne di Trachis* ("The Women of Trachis")¹²⁴ first performed in 1988, is at the core of the production. The title comes from one of Strozzi's laments that follows Sciarrino's piece.¹²⁵

Lastly, Keyne Cheshire's *Murder at Jagged Rock* (2015) is a musical adaptation of the *Women of Trachis* which moves it into the half-civilized, half-wild terrain of the American Wild West and its poetry into American vernacular. For Cheshire, the West represents the place of myth-making for Americans, and therefore it corresponds in a contemporary American context to the landscapes imagined by Athenian tragedy and myth. Heracles has become "Herk Kilman," the son of God, Deianeira is "Deanna," and shoots, rather than stabs herself, and the fatal robe is a poncho, but otherwise Cheshire keeps closely to Sophocles' structure.¹²⁶

Dance

Stories of Deianeira, Achelous, Heracles and Nessus were popular themes of artistic representation and were also themes for dance in the ancient world and for the popular imperial medium of pantomime (Libanius *Oration* 64.67). In 1473 the wedding of one of the sons, named Ercole (Heracles), of the ruling d'Este family in Ferrara, who used Heracles' power to symbolize their own, included a dance of Heracles and Deianeira and other mythological lovers attacked by centaurs.¹²⁷ The triumphant apotheosis of Heracles with his ultimate resurrection and role as a *deus ex machina* is frequently celebrated in ballets such as the French ballet-master Jean-Georges Noverre's *La Mort d'Hercule* ("The Death of Hercules", Stuttgart, 1762). This ballet begins with Heracles' triumphant return with conquered people from various nations in Europe, Asia

123 For details of her projects, including *Sino alla Morte*, see www.susannarucki.net/.

124 Sciarrino (1980).

125 Chute (2014).

126 Samples of the music for Cheshire (2015) are at <http://podcats.davidson.edu/wp-content/uploads/DRI-Jon-and-Keyne.mp3> and <http://podcats.davidson.edu/wp-content/uploads/DRI-Jon-and-Keyne-record-track.mp3>. For a live reading, see <https://vimeo.com/search?q=keyne+cheshire>.

127 Stafford (2012) 208.

and Africa in a grand procession. Noverre focuses on spectacle and action, and he includes many characters entirely extraneous to Sophocles, such as wrestlers and gladiators. From the start, it is clear that Hyllus and Iole are romantically interested in one another, and their love is encouraged by Deianeira. Heracles is displeased at this, but he is caught between desire for Iole and a sense of propriety towards his wife, and Philoctetes urges him to behave properly. Like the Heracles of some other adaptations of the *Women of Trachis*, which diverge from their original on this point, he is not the brutal adulterer of Sophocles, but a more virtuous character, as befits his idealized portrayal. At this point, Juno, accompanied by Jealousy, comes upon a sleeping Deianeira and Jealousy breathes poison into her so that when she awakes after dreaming of Heracles' infidelity, she is moved to employ the robe of Nessus against her husband. At this point, the plot of the ballet returns to a more Sophoclean path as Heracles feels the agonizing effect of the poison, and throws Lichas into the sea. When Deianeira realizes what she has done, she runs to Heracles, and he forgives her, but his pain means that he must fling himself on the pyre. Deianeira can bear no more and kills herself with a dagger, while Hyllus also attempts to end his own life, but is restrained by Iole, Philoctetes and Heracles' followers. Finally, however, Jupiter appears in the sky and Heracles is reborn from his ashes. His pyre transforms into a chariot which takes him up to Olympus, and the ballet ends with Hyllus' marriage to Iole.¹²⁸ Noverre was also choreographer to Jean Favier's *L'Apotheosi d'Ercole* ("Apotheosis of Heracles", Milan, 1768).

The Italian choreographer Francesco Clerico's *La Morte d'Ercole* ("The Death of Heracles", Florence, 1792) offers a notably virtuous set of characters, none of whom is really at fault. Here, Iole and Hyllus are attracted to one another from the start, but Deianeira is rightly suspicious of Heracles' intentions towards Iole when he returns home with her and her brother among his triumphant spoils. After a scene of dancing and joy, the action focuses on Deianeira. Heracles' feelings for Iole have aroused Deianeira's jealousy and she begins to plot against him, though Iole respects Deianeira's rights as Heracles' wife and uses this pretext to reject him without revealing her feelings for Hyllus. Heracles, inflamed with passion for Iole, decides to marry her instantly and makes a deal with her brother that he can regain his kingdom if he agrees to let him marry Iole. Meanwhile in a cave, Deianeira is making use of Nessus' gift to her, but when she opens the bottle and feels its intense heat, she is alarmed and hesitates to take her plan further. But invisible to her, figures of Jealousy, Fear and Hope surround her and she is battered by conflicting emotions. In the end, Jealousy is victorious and she goes ahead with her plans. In the last act,

¹²⁸ Noverre (1804) 158–168.

set in Jupiter's sacred wood, where there is a pyre and altar already, Heracles is getting ready to be married to Iole but Deianeira intervenes and pretends to accept the situation, handing him the robe before running from the hateful site of their marriage. After some joyous dancing, Heracles puts on the tunic and takes Iole to the altar, only to feel the horrid effects of his new clothing. Deianeira kills herself when she sees what is happening and Heracles leaps onto the pyre. The sky darkens and thunders and from Olympus, the deified Heracles orders his son to marry Iole. The story ends in wonder and joy at the miracle.¹²⁹ In 2012, the Szeged Contemporary Dance Company in Hungary staged *Avengers—Electra, Medea, Women of Trachis*, a ballet by Hungarian choreographer Tamas Juronics and Portuguese choreographer Pedro Goucha Gomes, whose overarching theme is clear from its name.¹³⁰

On Stage and Screen

Stage

As in the written tradition, the *Women of Trachis* has typically garnered less sustained attention in performance history, at least on the commercial stage, than Sophocles' other plays. A performance at Stanmore School, north west of London, in 1776 is recorded,¹³¹ while an admiring Robert Louis Stevenson rehearsed the messenger's part for a Scottish production of the play in 1877, in the translation by Lewis Campbell, another of the play's early admirers.¹³² It has occasionally been chosen for university productions: 1911 saw a production by Bedford College—a good choice given the centrality of women in it—for the Women's College's Building fund at the Court Theatre, which was praised by the suffragette Emily Davison.¹³³ King's College, London performed the *Women of Trachis* in Greek in 1964, dubbing it one of the "obscure or difficult plays",¹³⁴ and it was also the choice for the 1983 Cambridge Greek play. In the United States as well, the play has been performed at several universities in recent years, most recently (2016) by the Barnard-Columbia Ancient Drama Group in a production in Greek with English supertitles, with a chorus singing and dancing to a live score. The production focused especially on Greek female

129 Di Vergy (1819) 21–7; cf. Stafford (2012) 225.

130 For a brief video, see <https://vimeo.com/33032492>.

131 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 225.

132 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 447–8.

133 Hall/Macintosh (2005) 513.

134 <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/artshums/depts/classics/about/greek/archives/1960s/1964.aspx>.

experiences of marriage and motherhood as portrayed through Deianeira's experiences.¹³⁵

In Europe, the performance tradition is also relatively slight through much of the 20th century, though it was performed in an Italian production (as *Le Trachinie*) directed by Vincenzo Bonaiuto at Syracuse, along with *Iphigenia in Tauris* in 1933 with an impressive grey, abstract set full of steps and ramps, created by Duillio Cambelotti.¹³⁶ This powerful set was in fact reused for another production in Syracuse—2007's *Trachiniae* directed by Walter Pagliaro¹³⁷ who added to Cambelotti's original set some planks balanced over loose stones, whose visual instability reflected the instability of Heracles' house, making Deianeira's own steps unsteady and agitated. Pagliaro also added a bed of Heracles and Deianeira, which dominated the orchestra as the focal point both of Deianeira's sorrow at realising what she has done and of Heracles' sufferings. On either side of the bed stood a mass of twisted dark spears, representing Heracles, and also the skeleton of Nessus, which Deianeira clasped to her chest as she began to realize what she had done.

In Cologne, Hansgünther Heyme's *Frauen von Trachis* ("Women of Trachis", 1976) foregrounded the theme of Deianeira's fears as an older woman losing her husband to a younger one, and focused in general on the power of sexual attraction. At the start, sitting on a bare stage, the Chorus mixed clay and created two straw puppets, a baffling gesture at first, which was only became comprehensible at the end of the play, when they entered the acting area and set the puppets up, a male and a female with exaggerated sexual attributes. The puppets were intended to symbolize the slavery to desire that the power of sexual attraction can impose on human beings, but by being made of straw and clay, their flimsiness was also intended to represent human weakness.¹³⁸

But in spite of these earlier attempts to bring the *Women of Trachis* to a wider public, while American and European audiences had seen plenty of *Antigones*, they had been exposed to "virtually none" of the *Women of Trachis* on the commercial stage.¹³⁹ In fact, the best-known mid-20th-century production of the play was probably Ezra Pound's *Women of Trachis* in the American director Judith Beck's 1960 staging at the Living Theatre Repertory. But in the last twenty years, just as interest has grown in the less performed and loved plays of Euripides, so the *Women of Trachis* has assumed a larger performance profile

135 <http://classics.columbia.edu/greek-latin-play/>.

136 Walton (1987) 321–2, 326–7.

137 For a full review, see Barone (2007).

138 Flashar (1991) 240–1.

139 Hartigan (1995) 131, 138.

that goes beyond university productions to new versions in various formats on the commercial stage. Certain general tendencies shape these newer versions and performances. The play is frequently modernized extensively, perhaps due to writers' and directors' discomfort with what many scholars have seen as its rather archaic sensibility. In particular, some high-profile productions discussed below set its action explicitly in contemporary post-Iraq War politics. Additionally, a number of productions combine the *Women of Trachis* with other Heracles plays¹⁴⁰ or with other Sophoclean plays to give more context for a story that is relatively obscure to the general public. For example, in 1998, Theodoros Terzopoulos and the Attis theatre group based in Athens and Delphi performed "Descent", a "scenic composition" based on Euripides' *Heracles* and the *Women of Trachis*,¹⁴¹ while in the same year, the production at the 28th Classical Greek Theatre Festival of the University of Utah sandwiched the *Women of Trachis* itself between two original "satyr plays." The first portrayed Heracles' life and labours effectively with wit and technical ingenuity, to give the audience some mythological context for the play, while the second treated his apotheosis.¹⁴²

In 2004, the year of the Athens Olympics,¹⁴³ Natural Theatricals, a company which specializes in performing lesser-known tragedies, presented the *Women of Trachis* at the indoor amphitheatre of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial in what the director claimed was its first professional staging in the United States since 1960. In this production, the chorus was transformed into an individual character given a personal history and an energetic dramatic role in the story, while a separate collective of Oechalian women had their own expanded role: "although they never speak, these women bear silent witness to both the touching kindness of Deianeira and to the egocentric brutality of Herakles."¹⁴⁴ The production was naturalistic and unadorned, with basic lighting, in keeping with an equally plain and unadorned translation. A rather unsympathetic Heracles was "portrayed less as a mighty hero and

140 This strategy is not new: see, e.g., López de Zárate's combination of Seneca's two Heracles plays in the 17th century: above, 522.

141 <http://www.attistheatre.com/en/ΙΣΤΟΡΙΚΟ/terzopoulos.html>.

142 For a review of the production, see Cohen (1998).

143 The synchronicity was deliberate. The director, Brian Alprin wrote, "According to legend, the Olympic Games were established in antiquity by no one other than Herakles. In this year in which the modern Games return to Athens, site of the premiere performance of *The Women of Trachis*, we feel it is fitting to restore Herakles and his family to the stage and, more significantly, reintroduce this ignored Sophoclean drama to our audiences:" Alprin (2004).

144 Alprin (2004).

more as a modern televangelist" with a bombastic, preachy declamation of his lines.¹⁴⁵

2006–2008 saw *On the Greeks*, New York City's Target Margin Theater's "bold two-year exploration of Greek literature, tragedy, philosophy, poetry and drama for today's stage".¹⁴⁶ Their rendition of the *Women of Trachis*, adapted by the playwright Kate E. Ryan, exemplified some recurring tendencies in a number of modern productions of the play.¹⁴⁷ For example, their Deianeira was played as a glamorous but desperate housewife and celebrity spouse, while the three giggly young women who comprised the chorus were played largely for laughs, in spite of the tragic fate that awaits Deianeira and her husband.¹⁴⁸ In an attempt to recreate the contemporary, educational function of tragedy in the ancient world, the play bristled with modern popular culture and colloquialisms, and by being set in a world of unremitting news media, it attempted also to critique the modern era of "TV-news-tragedy overkill", on the grounds that such relentless coverage of suffering has had the counter-productive effect of making us no longer able to feel proper empathy with human suffering.¹⁴⁹ One reviewer asked some penetrating questions about the tendency of many contemporary renditions of tragedy to favour such relentless modernization, arguing that such works do not always benefit from being updated and can stand on their own. The *Women of Trachis* should be accessible entirely on its own terms, given that almost everyone has experienced romantic insecurity, but it seems relatively rare in modern performance history that directors have allowed it to be so.

In 2010, two productions in the North of England offered strikingly different visions of their Sophoclean original. *The Wife of Heracles* by George Rodosthenous was performed at Leeds,¹⁵⁰ and went whole-heartedly for modernization. This Heracles is a famous footballer and Deianeira, the feisty owner of a hairdresser's salon with (inevitably) a chorus consisting of gossipy girls. Heracles is accused of the murder of his chauffeur, Sam Nessus, while the father of Iole Gandenza has withdrawn his sponsorship from the team because Heracles is having an affair with her. The second act focuses on Heracles as a stereotypically arrogant and decadent football star, and it is set at a party

145 For a rather measured review of the production, see Toscano (2004).

146 <http://thesegalcenter.org/event/target-margin-theater-on-the-greeks/>.

147 For a review, see Kalb (2007).

148 Compare the treatment of the chorus in Crimp (2004).

149 Shore (2007).

150 <http://www.pci.leeds.ac.uk/ug/performances/archive/public-performances-2010/the-wife-of-heracles/>.

around a swimming pool. He is eventually poisoned by his teenage son Hyllus via a bottle of foxglove liqueur, and dies in the pool.¹⁵¹ By contrast, across the country, the Guildhall Theatre of York with Mnemosyne Theatre premiered the *Trachiniae*, a translation in strict verse form by Richard Rowland, notable for, and interacting with, a new musical score for live Javanese gamelan music on a custom-built gamelan for the University of York music department. Electronic music also underlay spoken words and occasional songs, in an attempt to blur the lines that modern drama tends to maintain between singing, dancing and speech, and to return to an ancient Greek unity of music, dancing and speech.¹⁵²

Similarly diverse approaches may be found in two productions of 2011, one in Chicago, the other in Avignon. The *Women of Trachis* featured as *In Trachis* in 2011's *Sophocles: Seven Sicknesses*, a four-hour long production combining all seven surviving Sophocles plays, created by the director Sean Graney¹⁵³ and performed by the Hypocrites, a Chicago-based troupe. The sensibility brought to it can be probably imagined from the tone of this promotional material: "... Greek plays are boring. Why would anyone want to watch some one screw his mother? ... Or rip out his own eyes? Or slaughter an entire herd of sheep, crazily thinking they are men? Who wants to see a woman buried alive by her own uncle? Or one of the world's greatest heroes, be eaten bloody-raw by poisonous Centaur semen?"¹⁵⁴ While this rendition did foreground some of the themes that are integral to its original, such as the dangerous powers of sexuality and emotion, Graney's vision in the context of the whole production lost some equally important elements in the *Women of Trachis*, such as Hyllus' difficult decision to end his father's life, while any nuanced portrayal of Deianeira's combination of insecurity and kindness was also lacking. This Deianeira is another desperate housewife who matches her husband in lust and pride: in fact, Iole, here given a speaking role, is more sympathetic than Deianeira is in being understanding about her older rival's pain. What she applies to Heracles' robe is no longer Nessus' blood but his bloody semen¹⁵⁵ that Deianeira took from him as he died in the hope that Iole, the household "infection," will be "ejaculated" from Heracles' mind. Graney also

151 Summary in Stafford (2012) 240.

152 Hutchinson (2010). Full video is available at: <https://vimeo.com/74264666>.

153 Graney (2013). In 2013, he went one better than *Seven Sicknesses* with a twelve-hour adaptation of all thirty-two extant Greek tragedies entitled *All Our Tragic*.

154 <http://www.the-hypocrites.com/production/sophocles-seven-sicknesses/>. It won theatrical awards in 2012 and some good reviews. See Lemieux (2011).

155 This variant on Sophocles is reported by Diodorus Siculus 4.36.5 and Apollodorus 2.7.6.

substitutes Philoctetes for Lichas, while Hyllus, far from resisting Heracles' demand that he marry Iole, is here quite enthusiastic about the prospect, leaving Philoctetes to handle Heracles' death.

A combination with a rather different sensibility, also in 2011, was performed at the Avignon festival and toured Europe thereafter. *Des Femmes* ("Of Women") featured *Women of Trachis*, *Antigone* and *Electra*¹⁵⁶ and emphasized female experiences in the three plays, especially in facing oppression from the rules of male society—Deianeira's in love, Antigone's in justice, and Electra's in vengeance. The director, Wajdi Mouawad, commissioned a new translation of all of Sophocles' plays from Robert Davreu,¹⁵⁷ but this was a poetic and lyrical translation that consciously did not seek to modernize them, but allowed them to reflect a world "in which the community, unlike the period in which we live, was the be all and end all of human existence." (Oddly, in the light of this claim, the music composed for the trilogy was "feverish rock music"). But of course, even in a play which engages with the otherness of Greek tragedy, there must be some direct connection with the contemporary world, and for Mouawad, Heracles' horrible and unheroic death causes him to ponder heroism and horror in recent European events.

The Women from Trachis (2012), translated and directed by Doron Bloomfield at the University of Michigan, blended traditional and modern elements.¹⁵⁸ Traditional elements included the use of masks and traditional Greek-tragedy style costuming, the use of one actor to play both Deianeira and Heracles, and the retention of Greek in parts of the play, notably "in the chorus's enthusiastic reaction to the Messenger's announcement that Herakles is returning home; a long passage of Greek, delivered in the manner of a prayer, launches the women into a thoroughly festive scene, complete with trumpets and dancing. The ritualized rejoicing is interrupted by the silent figure of Iole coming onto the stage, bound as a prisoner of war." Bloomfield's originality included a strong emphasis on generational conflict in the play, and some alterations in the script, especially those which directly implicate the chorus—three very young, playful girls—in Heracles' suffering and death.¹⁵⁹

156 The website for the production is unusually informative: <http://www.festival-avignon.com/en/shows/2011/des-femmes-les-trachiniennes-antigone-electre>. Gérardin (2011) offers material on the genesis of the production, extracts of Davreu's translation and photographs.

157 Davreu (2011).

158 For a review, see Pistone (2012), from which all quotations are taken.

159 "After Iole's identity has been revealed to Deianeira and her chorus women, the Chorus Leader . . . piercingly screams "Let him burn!" in anguish at Herakles' betrayal, a line that

In August 2013, the National Theatre of Greece staged a *Women of Trachis* directed by Thomas Moschopoulos (the director of the closing ceremony of 2004's Olympics), which toured Greece for the following month.¹⁶⁰ Even in Greece, the *Women of Trachis* has been one of the least popular tragedies, and the National Theatre of Greece had not staged it since 1970.¹⁶¹ The sense that its theme was unfamiliar was underlined by the director's choice of having the chorus recite Heracles' twelve labours for the audience to a loud percussion and flute accompaniment even before the play began. Moschopoulos chose to foreground several familiar themes of this play in his production—the contrast between civilization, represented by Deianeira's house, and barbarism, represented by Heracles himself, the dangers of passion, and the impossibility of constancy in human life. While the reviewer¹⁶² was less enthusiastic about the unevenness of the language of the play, which veered between ordinary prose, operatic and hip-hop styles, and of the acting, she praised the production's technical aspects for emphasizing some of the themes in Sophocles' play. Thus in the first part of the play, the soft and low lighting expressed the calm of Deianeira's house and the female world, in sharp contrast to its end, in which a painfully bright light illuminated the agonized Heracles and Hyllus. Central on stage was a large split tree trunk, a "symbol of barren nature" which served various purposes in the play, eventually being used as Heracles' bier and then as a platform on which he stands before he exits to his death. Costumes were also highly effective with simple, grey or black costumes for the chorus and nurse, and a tight dress and red scarf for Deianeira, suggesting a tightly-bound sexuality. Iole is first stripped of her grey blanket by Deianeira and then covered with her own red scarf, cleverly suggesting Deianeira's humiliating sacrifice of her own sexuality to her husband's new lover. Rather than emphasising Heracles' destruction through Nessus's garment, archaic and monstrous as it might easily seem to a modern audience, Moschopoulos worked with the silent figure of Iole to make her the agent of destruction for Deianeira and Heracles. Thus

hangs in the air ominously for anyone in the audience who knows how the play ends. Later in the play, once Herakles is enmeshed in the poisoned robe and Deianeira has left the stage to kill herself, the two main chorus girls begin to argue. The secondary chorus member . . . seems to assign blame to [the Leader], as though her prophetic cry set the events in motion."

160 For images and a brief video, see <http://www.n-t.gr/en/events/trahinies/>.

161 Walton (1987) 292, 295. There was, however, one 2004 production (*Trachiniae*) by the State Theatre of Northern Greece directed by Victor Ardittis, and Arvaniti (1995) reviews the rather conservative version of *Trachiniae* directed by Spyros A. Evangelatos at the 1994 Epidaurus festival.

162 Manteli (2013), from which all quotations are taken.

she reappears at the end of the play, wearing a long, transparent white dress, walks along the orchestra and then disappears. "In this way, winning the objectifying gaze of the audience, Iole projects herself as the absolute object which connects (but also destroys) Deianeira and Heracles." Less successful was the decision to portray Heracles in "a conspicuous bloodstained wedding dress featuring a padded muscle chest and arms, cothurni, and make-up more appropriate for heroes of action-adventure comics and sci-fi films" and a long shaggy wig. Unsurprisingly, his expressions of intense heroism and courage in agony failed to transcend this get-up and his grotesque appearance caused laughter among some of the spectators. This certainly suggests an ill-conceived directorial vision for Heracles, but it may also speak to the reception of this play more broadly. It seems that Heracles is a difficult character for a modern sensibility to handle and hard to portray in a manner that is convincing and sympathetic. A screening of the play also came to Johannesburg in 2014.¹⁶³

Perhaps the most admired modern adaptation of the *Women of Trachis*, which is gradually gaining its own tradition of performance, is Martin Crimp's *Cruel and Tender: After Sophocles' Trachiniae* (2004). Originally commissioned by Luc Bondy for a 2004 co-production between Wiener Festwochen Chichester Festival Theatre and the Young Vic, and part of the same project as Bondy's production of Handel's *Hercules* with Les Arts Florissants (Aix-en-Provence, 2004), it was also a production for Canadian Stage directed by Atom Egoyan in 2012.¹⁶⁴ Crimp's play is an updated, but structurally close version of Sophocles,¹⁶⁵ which emphasizes the gulf between the female home and the male military sphere. Here, Amelia, the wife of Jacek Koman, the General (Heracles), starts to feel concerned at rumours she hears that her husband, currently fighting in Africa, is a war criminal. Sophocles' messengers are updated into UN or government officials and the centaur's blood is now a phial of biochemical liquid (a drug ironically called Humane), the gift of Amelia's former lover, a researcher in psychotropic warfare who is the Nessus figure.¹⁶⁶ James (the Hyllus figure)

163 http://www.artlink.co.za/news_article.htm?contentID=34762.

164 For reviews of the 2012 production, see Karas (2012) and Ouzounian (2012) (unfavourable); more enthusiastic: Barcza (2012).

165 It also retains some Sophoclean imagery: in Crimp (2004) 8 Amelia (i.e., Deianeira) complains that the General (Heracles) only sees his child occasionally "like a farmer inspecting a crop/ in a remote field": compare *Women of Trachis* 32–3. The image of two wives under one blanket used by Laela (the Iole figure, given a greater role than in Sophocles) when she and Amelia are talking about their relationship with the General (Crimp [2004] 33) recalls *Women of Trachis* 539–40. Morwood (2008) 88–93; Stafford (2012) 261.

166 For Alison Croggon, reviewing Julian Meyrick's 2005 production, this painstaking updating was fussy and ultimately ineffective: Croggon (2005). Thompson (2005) offers a more

is a lazy adolescent who will be forced to grow up quickly because of his family's trials. The women of Trachis are rendered as Amelia's gossipy domestic staff—housekeeper, physiotherapist and beautician—and in fact, the play takes place in Amelia's bedroom. The General's fight in the war against terror is an updated version of Heracles' labours,¹⁶⁷ in the eternal war of civilization against monsters like the Hydra, which can only be temporarily killed and are soon resurrected in equally deadly form. But just as Sophocles' Heracles is an ambiguous civilizer, this general's civilizing mission is equally ambiguous in its violent effects. This purifier of the world is now also suspected of genocide, of fighting with child soldiers and cutting out a boy's heart in front of a crowd.

When word arrives of the General's victories, Amelia is briefly delighted, but Jonathan the government minister arrives with two silent Africans as the spoils of war. Gradually, it emerges that the General sacked a city and murdered its inhabitants, not to promote the war against terror but out of desire for his African mistress, Laela, the Iole figure. Whereas Sophocles' Heracles could sack a city, bring his mistress home and expect Deianeira to endure his behaviour, the General does not have the freedoms given to men in the patriarchal society of the ancient world. He will answer for what he has done, and not only to Amelia, but also to the media and government bureaucrats who have no compassion for him.¹⁶⁸ Amelia sends him the poisoned pillow and kills herself; he suffers from the physical effects of the poison, is then arrested for crimes he committed in his country's service, and is paraded on television as a war criminal. When he finally appears, he is destroyed, both mentally and physically, dressed in little more than a catheter and waste bag, and his great vulnerability helps to make him somewhat sympathetic, due to "Crimp's wish to look more closely at what he calls the "default left-wing British liberal thinking that all military people should be demonized."¹⁶⁹ In this play, the General, as much as Deianeira is a victim, used by his government to do their dirty work, but ultimately expendable. The play does, however, end on a slightly happier note than Sophocles does, as James walks on, holding the small son of Laela and Heracles in his arms, pointing to hope in a new generation. Crimp was writing at a time of distrust in media and government accounts of the Iraq invasion, especially in their handling of issues of torture. The play reflects and

positive review, while Billington (2004) admires the play precisely for its ingenuity in recasting the myth in a modern idiom.

167 At the end of the play (64), the general in his madness actually addresses himself as *kallinikos* ("glorious in victory") and the killer of the Nemean lion.

168 Fisher (2004).

169 Lewisohn (2011).

responds both to the conditions of the post 9/11 world—a context that has provided interpretative opportunities for many recent practitioners of Greek, and especially Euripidean, tragedy—and also to the recent use by Peter Meineck and Bryan Doerries of Greek tragedy to explore the lives of modern veterans.

The *Women of Trachis* has found an intriguing new reception through Bryan Doerries' "Outside the Wire" group, a theatre company that addresses through drama public health and social issues, such as veterans' post-war experiences, end of life care, substance abuse and addiction and so on.¹⁷⁰ His performances often consist simply of five actors at a table reading from scripts, but the readings are powerful and interactive, being followed by a panel and an audience conversation. Doerries' first *Women of Trachis* was in 2001 at the University of California, Irvine, as one of four plays in *Dionysus 2001*, along with *Ajax*, *Antigone* and a version of a satyr play called *The Bloodhounds* in a determinedly contemporary production with a colloquial and spare translation and contemporary music designed to appeal to a new audience for Greek tragedy. Like Bloomfield (2012), Doerries also retained some of the original Greek in his production, to remind audiences of the strangeness of tragedy, "relying on the actors to convey their characters' pain and outrage through inflection and gesture alone."¹⁷¹

In his current work with the *Women of Trachis*, Doerries uses Heracles' agony, as well as extracts from *Philoctetes*, to meditate on issues related to end of life care, such as the problems of excessively long-drawn-out deaths and of assisted suicide in the case of terminal illness.¹⁷² In Doerries' recent book, *The Theater of War: What Ancient Greek Tragedies Can Teach Us Today* (2015), his chapter on the *Women of Trachis* is entitled "Heracles in Hospice" (231–58) and offers an intensely personal case¹⁷³ for putting limits on keeping the terminally suffering alive through an exploration of Sophocles' play and discussion of ancient medicine and ancient practitioners' attitudes to terminal illness. Elsewhere, Doerries states that after a reading of Heracles' death agonies, one senior oncologist stood up, "his hands noticeably trembling—and remarked, "I have never questioned my views on euthanasia in more than thirty years of practicing medicine until tonight, when I heard the actor playing Heracles

170 For an account of all of the company's projects, including "Theater of War" and "End of Life" discussed in this paper, see <http://www.outsidethewirellc.com>.

171 Quotation from the review by Boehm (2001).

172 For an appreciation, along with some mild critique of Doerries' insistence on the sameness of ancient and modern experience, see Hanink (2015).

173 Doerries lived through the death of his 22-year old girlfriend from cystic fibrosis in 2003: Doerries (2015a) 4–7.

screaming.”¹⁷⁴ He has performed extracts from this text from 2010–2013 for doctors at Harvard Medical School, the Mayo Clinic, and various children’s hospitals¹⁷⁵ and colleges. In a slightly back-handed tribute to the play’s latent power, in one performance in Falmouth, the readings from the *Women of Trachis* were deemed too upsetting for potential audiences and were cut out of Outside the Wire’s usual presentation.¹⁷⁶

Finally, in March and May 2016 the Svoradov Theatre Company in Thessaloniki presented a highly contemporary version of the play, entitled *Trachiniae of Sophocles: the 90’s performance*, with music from Greek hits of the 1990s. The focus of this production was avowedly political in its reading of the story of Deianeira’s gradually declining relationship with Heracles in the light of the disillusionment of Greeks with their own society, from the so-called “golden” Greek 1990s to Greece’s troubled present.¹⁷⁷

Screen

Heracles’ great deeds have been well-represented in 20th-century film and television, but his sad end has been understandably less popular. However, certain elements of Sophocles do inform *Hercules in the Underworld* (1994),¹⁷⁸ a film made for television preceding the related television series *Hercules: the legendary journeys* (1995–1999).¹⁷⁹ While it is certainly not an adaptation of the play as such, certain elements in it correspond to Sophocles’ plot: Iole is the cause of dissent between Deianeira and Heracles; Nessus attempts to rape

174 Doerries (2015b) 345: the translation of the *Women of Trachis* is 343–462. The translation is spare and unadorned, though with a notably medical cast in places, leaving interpreters to put their own emotional mark and meaning onto the words. The issue of euthanasia has had some recent impact on the reception of ancient drama, one notable example being the re-writing of Sophocles’ *Antigone* by a contemporary Italian writer, Valeria Parrella, in 2012: see Lauriola (2014 and 2015).

175 A reading of the *Women of Trachis* in this context may be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtniDNRbaho>. See also <http://iom.nationalacademies.org/Activities/Aging/TransformingEndOfLife/End%20of%20Life%20-%20Panel%20Discussion.aspx>.

176 Doerries (2015b) 247–58. On a side note, Heracles’ death on the pyre is used as an inspiring example by the *Good Funeral Guide* in the UK: <http://www.goodfuneralguide.co.uk/2012/03/page/4/>.

177 <http://artplay.gr/theatro/i-tragodia-ine-to-soundtrack-tis-epochis-mas>.

178 Directed by Bill Norton, for Renaissance Pictures, an American film production company. It was filmed in New Zealand and starred Kevin Sorbo.

179 Made by Anchor Bay Entertainment, an American home entertainment company. For a full list of cast and directors, see <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt011999/>.

Deianeira;¹⁸⁰ Nessus dies, bequeathing his blood-drenched cloak to her; and a messenger tells her that the cloak has killed Heracles, leading to her suicide. After this, however, the film leaves its Sophoclean trajectory, since it turns out that the cloak has only nearly killed Heracles, because he has much more adventuring to do and the franchise must run for a few more years yet.¹⁸¹ A character called Deianeira appears in some other episodes of *Hercules: the legendary journeys* but these have no connection with Sophocles' story. Disney's animated *Hercules* movie (1997), directed by Ron Clements and John Musker features Nessus, a Centaur and a river guardian who attempts to seduce Heracles' wife, but she is saved by Heracles' prowess. However, this is not Deianeira but Megara, and the darker myth of the *Women of Trachis* has, unsurprisingly, no place in this film.

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *Women of Trachis*

As one would expect from the relative lack of appreciation offered to the *Women of Trachis* until quite recently, major works of scholarship specifically handling its reception are not common. Easterling (1982) contains some material on early reception of the play and is essential reading as a commentary on the play; Davies (1991) does not treat its reception, but does talk about the myth before Sophocles, and is vital for advanced readers of the play. However, the most useful sources for reception of the play can be found in scholarship on Heracles himself. Galinsky (1972) discusses the figure of Heracles in many different traditions, and includes substantial material on Sophocles' play in later tradition. His work, now over 40 years old, is very helpfully supplemented and expanded by Stafford (2012), which again contains significant and useful material on the *Women of Trachis*. Uhlenbrock (1986) offers a broad sweep of artistic representations of Heracles through the ages, while Boardman (1988) is also indispensable. Reid (1993), vol. 1, especially 530–540, though it is in the form of a list, is also very helpful for getting an overview of the multiple treatments of the events of the *Women of Trachis* (more than of the actual play) in later art and music.

180 Although he is not a wild river-dweller as in the standard tradition, but has been their domestic Centaur up until this point.

181 For a synopsis, see <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0110019/>.

Selection of Further Readings (and Other Resources)

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APPENDIX

Not Only Tragedy: The Fragmentary Satyr Play



The Trackers

Simone Beta

The plot of Sophocles' Trackers comes from the Hymn to Hermes attributed to Homer.

The story is well known. Soon after his birth in the land of the Arcades, Hermes (son of Zeus and the nymph Maia) first creates a musical instrument out of the carapace of a turtle (the lyre) and then steals the cows of his step brother Apollo (son of Zeus and the nymph Leto). Forced by his father to reveal Apollo the place where he had hidden the cattle, the young god gives Apollo his lyre and keeps the cows for himself.

To this mythical material Sophocles added the elements that were the fundamental ingredient of the dramatic genre called 'satyr play', namely the chorus of satyrs led by their old father, Silenus.

In Literature

The story alluded for the first time (as it seems) by the lyric poet Alcaeus (6th century BC) and told in detail by the unknown poet who wrote the *Hymn to Hermes* (580 lines) in a period that goes from the 7th to the 6th century BC (but some scholars point to a more recent date, between 6th and 5th century), was then exploited by the tragic poet at the beginning of the 5th century with some relevant changes from the original version, mostly induced by the theatrical setting of the play.¹

It is not possible to tell if this peculiar version had a reception of its own, distinct from that of the hexametric composition falsely attributed to Homer. Some aspects of Sophocles' play might have inspired other authors, though.

This is probably the case of the presence of the nymph Cyllene among the characters of the satyr play. In the hymn, it is Maia, Hermes' mother, who hides his son in a cave and protects him from Apollo's rage; in the play, Maia's role is

1 Alcaeus' lost poem (fr. 308 Voigt), the second ode of the first book of the Alexandrian edition, was imitated by Horace (*Odes* 1.10); on the relationship between the two poems (whose main subject—the celebration of the god—took its start from the finding of the lyre and the theft of the cattle), see Cairns (1983). On the chronology of Sophocles' *Trackers* and its relationship with the pseudo-Homeric Hymn, see Maltese (1982) 12–20; on the differences between the two works, see Koettgen (1914).

taken by Cyllene, another nymph, who, acting as the god's wet-nurse, stands up to the chorus of satyrs and sides with the young Hermes. It is then possible that those Greek and Latin writers who mention Cyllene as the wet-nurse of the god are referring to Sophocles' satyr play. I think of Philostephanus of Cyrene (3rd century BC), a pupil of the Hellenistic poet Callimachus, who states that Cyllene was Hermes' nurse; I also think of Festus (2nd century AD), a Latin grammarian, who states that the god was called *Cyllenius* either because he was born near Cyllene, a Arcadian mountain, or because he was brought up by the nymph Cyllene.²

Another passage whose main subject might have influenced other poets is quite probably the long scene where Cyllene challenges the satyrs to guess the animal Hermes used to build his musical instrument. Cyllene's words look like a riddle: she tells the chorus that the strange and charming sound they have just heard comes from an animal that, after its death, did receive a voice, but it was mute when it was alive.³ Since the many solutions proposed by the satyrs are all comically wrong, Cyllene adds some other clues (the animal is short and round, pot-shaped and shrivelled, with short legs and a spotted skin, similar to oysters);⁴ at the end, she gives the correct answer (the turtle). The long and successful tradition of this popular riddle in Greek and Latin literature might therefore come from Sophocles' play; one of its oldest witnesses, a fragment of Pacuvius' *Antiopa* (a tragedy composed in the 2nd century BC) quoted by Cicero (1st century BC), comes probably from the main source of the Latin playwright, the *Antiopa* composed by Euripides, who might have imitated the Sophoclean passage (the use of the conditional is due to the fact that the Euripidean tragedy is lost).⁵

What can be said for sure is the fact that, after late antiquity, the *Trackers*, like the great majority of the satyr plays composed in the 5th century (with the only exception of Euripides' *Cyclops*), fell into oblivion.⁶ Since it was not copied in the medieval manuscripts, its memory was completely lost; when the philologists, in the 19th century, started to collect the remains of the theatrical productions of the ancient Greeks, they were not able to find more than just

2 Philostephanus, 3.9 Müller (from the lost book *On Cyllene*, quoted by the scholiast to Pindar, *Olympic* 6.129e); Sextus Pompeius Festus, 45. 11–3 Lindsay.

3 Sophocles, *Trackers*, fr. 314 Radt, l. 300.

4 Sophocles, *Trackers*, ll. 302, 304 and 310.

5 Pacuvius, fr. 3 Schierl (quoted by Cicero, *De divinatione* 2.64.133); for another Latin version of the riddle, see Symphosius, *Aenigma* 20 (*testudo*). A Greek version can be read in the *Greek Anthology* (14.30); see also the enigmatic description of the animal given by Nicander, *Alexipharmaka* 559–62. On the fortune of the riddle, see Borthwick (1970).

6 On the reception of Euripides' *Cyclops*, see Beta (2015).

three small fragments.⁷ These very scanty remains (a bunch of short quotations by Pollux, Athenaeus, Photius, Eustathius, and the Suda) did not allow to say anything at all about the plot of the play; if the lexicographer Julius Pollux (2nd century AD) had not added to its title the adjective 'satyr', it would not have even been possible to know that the *Trackers* were a satyr play.⁸

The destiny of the play changed suddenly in 1912, when Arthur S. Hunt published, with the help of Ulrich von Wilamowitz and other philologists, the papyrus written in the 2nd century AD he had found, together with Bernard P. Grenfell, in the Egyptian town of Oxyrhynchus (P. Oxy. 1174), containing the first 458 lines of the play.⁹

In Fine Arts

Visual Arts

When they were drawn in the Attic black figure vases dated at the 6th century BC, the first deeds of the young Hermes could not but follow the narrative patterns of the pseudo-Homeric hymn.¹⁰ But the same can be said of the more recent red figure vases as well, such as the bowl (now in the Vatican Museums) painted by the Brygos painter between 480 and 470, where there is no trace of satyrs.¹¹

Since in the 5th century satyrs are often portrayed in the act of crawling together with other animals (dogs, bulls and cows, he- and she-goats), and since in Sophocles' satyr play the chorus mimed the behavior of animals that were (as the title of the play shows) like dogs on the tracks of the stolen cattle, it has been suspected that some of these illustrations might refer to the *Trackers*. But such an assumption cannot be anything more than a supposition quite hard to demonstrate.¹²

7 Dindorf (1846) 212, fr. 295–297.

8 Pollux, *Onomasticon* 10.34 = fr. 293 Nauck² (now fr. 314 Radt, l. 316).

9 Hunt (1912). Some more lines of the play are contained in the fragment of another papyrus (P. Oxy. 2081); see Hunt (1927). Both fragments have been published in the more recent collections of Sophocles' fragments, Pearson (1917) and Radt (1977), and in the collections of the fragments of Greek satyr plays (Steffen 1952 and Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker 1999).

10 See the pitcher from Caere described by Siebert (1990) 309, nr. 241; see also the remark of Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker (1999) 309 n. 76.

11 Siebert (1990) 309–10, nr. 242; Beazley (1963) 2: 269.6.

12 The suggestion put forward by Simon (1997) 1118, nr. 76 (three vases dated 430/420 with dancing satyrs together with bulls and oxen), has been rejected by Krumeich/Pechstein/Seidensticker (1999) 309.

Later literary evidence, such as the painting described by Philostratus in the *Images*, where the god is portrayed together with his mother Maia (and not his nurse Cyllene), seem to demonstrate that most artists referred to the pseudo-Homeric version.¹³

Music

One of the most famous works of Albert Roussel, a French composer born in 1869 in the region of Lille, is the ballet *Bacchus et Ariane*, first performed in Paris in 1931.¹⁴ This ballet is not his only work based on a classical subject: a few years before, between 1922 and 1924, Roussel had composed a small opera in three parts on the invention of the lyre, first performed on the 1st of July 1925 in Paris, at the Palais Garnier, under the conduction of Philippe Gaubert.¹⁵ The title of this *conte lyrique* ("lyric tale"), whose subject is based on Sophocles' satyr play, is *The naissance de la lyre* ("The birth of the lyre"). The libretto was written by Théodore Reinach, one of the most brilliant French classicists, who closely adhered to the plot of the Sophoclean version.¹⁶

After an orchestral prelude, Apollo (a tenor) enters the scene, looking for his cattle; Silenus (a bariton) offers him the help of his young sons, because he is too old to go hunting the thief. Apollo agrees, and the chorus of Satyrs makes its dancing appearance and soon starts the hunt off, following the suggestions of Silenus.¹⁷ When they arrive in front of the cave, they hear the beautiful sound of the lyre; they would like to find out who is playing, but the nymph Cyllene

13 Philostratus, *Images* 1.26.

14 Based on a scenario written by Abel Hermant, it tells the story of the abduction of Ariadne by the god Dionysus. The scenes of the first performance were designed by Giorgio De Chirico. The popularity of music of the ballet has been enhanced by the two symphonic suites created by Roussel himself in 1933 and 1934.

15 In 1935, two years before his death, Roussel composed the music of another ballet on a classical subject. Less famous than *Bacchus et Ariane*, his *Aeneas* is based on a subject written by the Belgian writer Joseph Weterings (the love between the Trojan hero and the queen Dido) and was performed for the first time in Brussels, at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, during the International Exposition.

16 Archeologist and philologist, historian and epigrapher, numismatist and papyrologist, Reinach is also famous for Villa Kérylos, the Greek-style magnificent property he built for himself and his family at Beaulieu-sur-mer, in the French Riviera, in the early 1900s.

17 The names of the three satyrs (Drachis, Grapis, Krokias) mentioned in Reinach's libretto directly come from the text of Sophocles' play (fr. 314 Radt, ll. 183 and 192, where Krokias comes from a supplement suggested by Carl Robert).

(a speaking role) summons the second chorus, the Nymphs, who try to prevent the Satyrs from entering the grotto.¹⁸

Apollo breaks off the fight and Cyllene invites the mysterious player to show himself. The young Hermes (a soprano) goes out of the cave and sings a song accompanying himself with the lyre. Charmed by his step brother's art, Apollo takes the instrument and plays it in his turn. When he is about to fly to the mount Olympus with Hermes, Silenus asks Apollo for his reward; the god gives him and his sons a golden tripod.

The opera ends with both choruses celebrating Apollo's glory, while the constellation of the Lyre makes its appearance in the darkening sky.¹⁹

Dance

Apart from the dancing sections of the aforementioned Roussel's *conte lyrique*, to the best of my knowledge there are no other ballet scenes specifically inspired by Sophocles' satyr play.

On Stage and Screen

Stage

The story of the stage productions of the *Trackers* begins in 1913, just one year after the publication of the papyrus fragment. The play was performed, in a German translation, in Halle, a town of Lower Saxony, on the 21st of June.²⁰

In 1921 Sophocles' satyr play (*Slidiči*) was performed, together with Euripides' *Medea*, at the National Theater of Prague; the producer was Karel Hugo Hilar,

18 Since the dances of the two choruses play a significant part in Roussel's music score, there is no wonder if the production decided to entrust its choreography to a real expert: the dancing movements were designed by Bronislava Nijinska, sister of the more famous Vaslav Nijinsky, who had moved to Paris in 1909 to join the Ballets Russes, the company founded by Sergei Diaghilev. Among her most noteworthy choreographies, there are the first performances of Stravinsky's *Les noces* (1923), Milhaud's *Le train bleu* and Poulenc's *Les biches* (1924), Ravel's *Boléro* (1928).

19 The role of Apollo was sung by Edmond Rimbaud; Silenus was Henri Fabert; the young Hermes was Marcelle Denya. More details on this opera in Corbier (2008).

20 I owe this reference to the APGRD (Archive of Production of Greek and Roman Drama): *Ichneutae* (1913) [10526], accessed at [http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/archive/Gen-Col/Sop/Sop.Ich.1913\(10526\)](http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk/archive/Gen-Col/Sop/Sop.Ich.1913(10526)). Most of the information given in this section comes from the Archive.

whose major success (in the field of classical plays) was the production of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* at the same venue in 1932.²¹

Another significant event was the production of the play in the classical theater of the Sicilian town of Syracuse during the 1927 season, the fifth cycle of classical performances organized by the board that was going to become the 'Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico' (INDA: 'National Institute of the Ancient Drama'). Its first season dates 1914, when Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* was put to stage in the translation of Ettore Romagnoli, the famous Italian classicist who had a significant role in the birth of the Syracuse festival.

For the 1927 season Romagnoli used his own translations of Sophocles' *Trackers* and Euripides' *Cyclops*, the only other satyr play we happen to know.²² *Cyclops* followed the performance of another Euripidean play, *Medea*, while *Trackers* (with the title *I satiri alla caccia*) were performed after Aristophanes' *Clouds*.²³

The staging of plays belonging to different genres (tragedy, comedy and satyr drama) had been part of a very ambitious project—and not without a celebrative purpose, since the original committee for classical performances had just been changed into a “moral and national institute” (the INDA) by Benito Mussolini, who had attended the 1924 season (the fourth cycle). But the 1927 season was also the last one presided by Romagnoli, because in the month of November of that very year the Italian philologist was relieved of his post.²⁴

This was the first and last appearance of both satyr plays in the Syracusan theater. The *Trackers* had to wait for more than thirty years before they were staged again. This time it happened in London, at the Tower Theatre, in 1959, together with a *comédie-ballet* by Molière (*Georges Dandin*). Directed by David

21 Stehlíková (2001) 81–82 and 96. The Greek text was translated by the Czech classicist Ferdinand Stiebitz; the designer was Josef Wenig; the incidental music was composed by Jaroslav Weinberger. On Hilar's career, see Burian (1982); on his staging of Sophocles' *Slidiči* see also Šormová (2001) 67–8. Stehlíková (2001) 101, 103 and 126 mentions other Czech productions of Sophocles' satyr play: Brno 1942 and 1943 (at the Conservatory, together with Plautus' *Mostellaria*); Prague 1943 (two performances in the theater of the Smetana Museum and one in a high school); Prague 1996 (at the Společnost Filtré).

22 On Romagnoli's translations see Zoboli (2000) 852; they are dated 1911 (*Cyclops*) and 1925 (*Trackers*). On the other Italian translations of Greek satyr plays, see Zoboli (2000) 864, 868.

23 On the production of Euripides' satyr play, see Beta (2015) 612 and 614, together with Treu (2006). The incidental music was composed by Giuseppe Mulé; the choreographer was Valerie Kratina; the designer was Duilio Cambellotti. On the latter, see Quesada (1999). The other ante-war Syracuse productions are listed and discussed by Flashar (1991) 163.

24 For the reasons that lay behind this surprising decision see Treu (2006) 353–4.

Thompson, *The Searching Satyrs* (such was the title of the English translation made by Roger Lancelyn Green) were performed by his company, the Tavistock Repertory Company, for seven nights, starting March 9th.

But all these performances had to face one major problem, namely the lack of the conclusion of the satyr play. We can easily guess how the story did finish, because its happy ending had to be similar to that of the pseudo-Homeric hymn: in the missing part (about 300–400 lines, something less than the part saved by the papyrus), Apollo, after having exchanged his cows with the musical instrument invented by Hermes, gave Silenus and the satyrs their freedom back.²⁵

Each director, together with the translator from the Greek original, had to choose his own solution, lest he wanted to keep the ending open. But the easiest solution in similar cases cannot be anything but the rewriting of the missing lines, with a variable amount of liberty, often verging on an inescapable arbitrariness. Unless one decided to rewrite the play completely.

Driven by his extremely wide knowledge of Greek literature, as witnessed by the vastness of his production, Ettore Romagnoli took this second chance: before translating and adapting for the stage the satyr dramas written by Sophocles and Euripides, he published between 1914 and 1922 three volumes of satyr dramas written by himself, based on plots either already exploited by classical authors (the stories of Polyphemus, Helen, and Alcestis), or reconstructed from a small group of fragments (the fight between Heracles and the Cercopes, the tricks of Sisyphus), or even created by his own imagination.²⁶ In the years of World War II another Italian professor, Angelo Taccone, wrote two satyr dramas “alla maniera di Euripide” (“in Euripides’ style”).²⁷

But Romagnoli’s and Taccone’s reconstructions have nothing to do with our satyr play. On the contrary, Sophocles’ *Trackers* (together with the story of its partial resurrection out of the Egyptian desert) is the starting point of one of the most genial rewritings of an ancient play. On the evening of the 12th of July, 1988, in the ancient stadium of Delphi, in Greece, there was the first performance of *The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus*, a play written by Tony Harrison.

Harrison, an English poet born in Leeds in 1937, placed the plot of the ancient satyr play inside a frame where the protagonists were Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt, the two English papyrologists who had found the fragments of the Sophoclean lost play. While Grenfell is digging out thousands of papyrus

25 For a tentative reconstruction of the missing lines see Piraino (1978–1979).

26 Romagnoli (1914), (1919) and (1922). For his own translation of Sophocles’ satyr drama, see Romagnoli (1918), 91–128 (*I satiri alla caccia*, an essay on Greek satyr drama in general, with the translations of the major surviving fragments of this literary genre).

27 Taccone (1940) and (1941). On these satyr dramas, see Zoboli (2000) 852, n. 89.

scraps out of the rubbish mounds near the ancient town of Oxyrhynchus with the help of his younger colleague and a group of local workers, he is urged by the god Apollo himself to find the remains of a drama where he plays a leading role. When Grenfell eventually finds the fragment with the beginning of Sophocles' *Trackers*, uttered by the god, he suddenly changes himself into Apollo, while the Egyptians fellaheens become the satyrs and, in the shoes (better: the hooves) of Silenus, Hunt leads the 'hunt' to the stolen cattle.

Harrison's play follows the tracks of the Greek original until the end of the fragment, but finds a brilliant conclusion when the text of the papyrus ends. Apollo is ready to leave the cows to Hermes on condition that he gets the lyre, but the satyrs, charmed by its fascinating sound, require the instrument for themselves. By relying on his divine authority, the god forces the satyrs to give up a thing that is not suitable for their low condition (because the lyre is made for accompanying high poetry) and presents them with ghetto-blasters instead. Hurt by this haughty and contemptuous behavior, the satyrs destroy the papyrus fragments from which they had been born again after centuries of oblivion.

In the following years Harrison rewrote the play, heightening the social and cultural aspects of his peculiar rendering. This second version opened at the National Theater's Olivier Auditorium in London, on March 27, 1990, and was followed by seventeen performances.²⁸ In the same year, Harrison's play was performed in Yorkshire, at Salt's Mill, not far from Leeds (Harrison's home town) and in Carnuntum, the celebrated Roman site near Vienna, in Austria; other performances are dated 1992 (Sidney, Wharf Theater) and 1998 (Leeds, West Yorkshire Playhouse).²⁹

28 Marshall (2012) 557–71 is a very deep analysis of both Harrison's versions of the plays, with a detailed bibliography. The incidental music was composed by Stephen Edwards; the stage designer was Jocelyn Herbert. On *The Trackers of Oxyrhynchus*, see also Flashar (1991) 289–90, plus McDonald (1992) 95–113 and 127–44 (with a long interview to Harrison) and (2003) 115–17. In his review of Flashar' and McDonald' books, Knox (1996) deals with Harrison's play as well. Barone (1991) 295–97 deals briefly with Harrison's play and mentions another rewriting, *I segugi*, written by Miklós Hubay and Sauro Albisani, performed in 1988 in Rome by the students of the Accademia d'arte drammatica Silvio D'Amico (incidental music: Massimiliano Forza) and published in *Sipario: rassegna mensile dello spettacolo* 543 (March 1994) 35–53.

29 Harrison's original version inspired another very peculiar adaptation of Sophocles' satyr play, namely *The Goats of Oxyrhynchus* (whose original Arab title is *Meaiz Albahnasa*), a play written in 2000 by the Egyptian writer Ahmed Etman, a former professor of Classics and Comparative Literature at Cairo University. On the peculiarities of this reworking that, through the fusion of a part of ancient Greek literature (the discovery of the papyrus

During these years the satyr play was put to stage in its original form as well: the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD, a research project based in the Classics Centre at the University of Oxford) mentions *The searching satyrs*, performed at the Nat Horne Theatre of New York City in 1988 (director: Gary Beck), and *Trackers*, performed at the Riverside Studios in Hammersmith, during the eleventh London Festival of Greek Drama (director: Russell Shone) in 1998.

We do not know how much success these last performances had. But probably the only way to make, of such a fragmentary and incomplete pièce, a show that can truly catch the attention of an audience is to work inside and outside its structure in order to change it into something really new. Adding a lot of music, for instance, is another good way of strengthening a play that is much shorter and poorer than it was when it was written in the 5th century BC. As a matter of fact, music can give back to the performance something that had a significant place in the original version performed in the theatre of Dionysus at the slopes of the Acropolis, because we know very well that music (and dance) were extremely appreciated by the ancient audience.

This is why the last item of this list is a musical performed for the first time in 2001, February 8th, at the University of California, at Irvine.³⁰ Produced as the final part of a tetralogy entitled *Dionysus 2001*, the satyr play *Blood Hounds* (the original title) was performed by the students after three Sophoclean tragedies (*Ajax*, *Antigone*, *Women of Trachis*), as it used to happen at the time of the ancient Greeks.

Screen

To the best of my knowledge, Sophocles' version of the subject of the pseudo-Homeric *Hymn to Hermes* is missing from movie scripts.

fragments of Sophocles' *Trackers*) with the indigenous Egyptian culture (witnessed by the character of the *Maghannawati*, the name of the traditional singer in the Egyptian countryside), underlines the significant role Egypt has played (and continues to play) in the afterlife of the ancient classics, see Almohanna (2010) and (2016).

- 30 Bryan Doerries, the writer of the text and the director of the performance, put to stage his first adaption (Euripides' *Bacchae*) in 1998, while he was a student at Kenyon College (Gambier, Ohio). He then translated Sophocles' *Philoctetes* for a New York performance in 2006 (director: Allan Buchman), later staged as a reading at the University of Cornell for the students of the Medical School. In 2015 he published the book *The Theater of War. What Ancient Greek Tragedies Can Teach Us Today* (Melbourne: Scribe).

Major Works of Scholarship on the Reception of *The Trackers*

To the best of my knowledge, there is not a specific, comprehensive scholarly work devoted to the reception of this play.

Selection of Further Readings (and other Resources)

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